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"Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,  
Our greatest evil or our greatest good."  
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POPE.

BY FREDERIC W. SAWYER.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE propriety of preparing a treatise like this, on amusements, first occurred to me while investigating their claims for my own guidance. With the exception of a very able article by Francis J. Grund, Esq., on the social institutions of several of the nations of Europe, from which I took the hint for illustrating the tendency of amusements, as in Chapter VIII., I found little or nothing that seemed to be designed to illustrate the subject. I had, therefore, to choose between examining it for myself as best I could, and groping on, uncertain of the true path of duty in respect to those enjoyments. I chose the former course. As usual, in such cases, the subject grew on my hands. The more I examined it, the more important it seemed to me in its bearings every way. I thought I saw a

large part of the public occupying a false position towards amusements. I thought I could trace many of the evils, that affect society, to that source. To awaken the attention of the public to the consideration of the subject, and to elicit that thorough examination of it, that its claims seemed to demand, I prepared this work. If it effects that object, my design will be answered.

THE AUTHOR.

JULY 6th, 1847.

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A

PLEA FOR AMUSEMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

TRACES THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENT HOSTILITY TO PLEASURES AND AMUSEMENTS.

IN treating of amusements, I am far from supposing that any one will be disposed to consider the subject one of so slight importance as to be unworthy of notice. They exercise too great an influence on us, in all the relations of life, to warrant us in dismissing their claims without some consideration ; but yet I am quite as far from believing that, as yet, they have ever excited the attention that they really merit. Their claims have suffered under, what proves to be, too often, the source of ruin to a great number — our disregard of what we term *little*

things. It is very seldom that we are sufficiently impressed with the importance of placing a just estimate on every thing that bears any relation to us, however humble it may appear, and of assigning it its own appropriate and natural sphere in the circle of influences that surround us. We are seldom sufficiently impressed with the fact that every thing, from the lightest mote that floats in the air to the sun that shines, has its own particular and natural sphere, where it may be useful; and that in proportion as it is removed from that sphere its usefulness ceases and its mischievous tendencies begin. The old maxim, "Every thing in its place," is second to scarcely any one other rule that ever was written, both for the obvious truth that it teaches and its comprehensive brevity. The difficulty is not that we doubt the truth of the rule, but that we seem to be unconscious that every thing has a place. And yet it is a rule founded on the great laws of nature, as every one soon learns who attempts to deal with matter in any form. Every departure from it is soon found, by the skilful artist, to be so far a departure from accuracy and perfection. We are taught

the importance of the rule in the humblest things around us as clearly, if not as impressively, as in the mightiest. That floating mote, humble as it is, when so far removed from its natural sphere as to interfere with the sensitive organs of the eye, may painfully illustrate the mischiefs that follow from misplacing the most trifling things. A slight mistake in the nature or office of a drug oftentimes illustrates the rule at the cost of a life. The importance of the rule is as apparent in the regular throb and accuracy of the watch that ticks by our side as in the order that rules the planets. All of our confidence, in every thing of man's invention and construction, is founded on the belief, that in it this great rule has not been materially violated. It is in view of that belief that we are willing to tempt the dangers of the seas, trusting in the strength of the bark that bears us, in the power of the engine that propels us, and in the accuracy of the compass that guides us ; it is because we believe that every timber, every bolt, every wheel, every agency in those mighty instruments of usefulness and power, have been assigned their exact and appropriate place and duty

in the great work of carrying us safely, through angry waves, to our destined haven.

This rule is just as inflexible in all that relates to mind as in matter. It controls in morals just as truly as it does in the arts. A slight error in the estimate that we place on the various influences that surround us may destroy the whole beauty and order of our lives. If we over-estimate or under-estimate any of these influences, we equally err. Even a good thing may exert as mischievous an influence when unduly exalted as when unduly depressed, since, in either case, it disarranges the order and harmony of the divine arrangement, and throws all the other influences that surround us into false positions, that no more answer the exact intention of their great Author than would that wonderful instrument, with which we explore the heavens in search of new worlds, were the unskilful or careless artisan to disturb its beautiful and orderly arrangement by inverting one of its glasses, and making what was before convex concave. Hence, fanaticism, in a good cause, even, is as mischievous as the most stubborn hostility. Our Creator has seen fit to surround us with a host of

influences ; and he who has the wisdom to justly *appreciate* all of them, and the disposition to *employ* all of them in their proper places, may gather from life all the sweets that it is capable of affording, and lie down, at last, educated for happiness in a brighter sphere ; while he who fixes a false estimate on any of them, however inferior, will suffer in proportion, and find the ruinous consequences of it written on his health, habits, and morals. Where a whole community disregard this great rule, the effects of its violation will appear, not only in that way, but in their disordered civil and social relations. Especially is this the case when we hold the balance uneven in respect to principles and practices that enter largely into our daily thoughts and concerns ; when we fix a false estimate on the importance of allotting any part of our time to devotion, or study, or labor, or recreation, and say that any, or all, or none, of those great agencies shall, or shall not, enter into the plan of our daily duties and employments.

If all this be true, and if a slight error even in little things may produce so much disorder, how important is it that we fix a just

estimate upon those great mental, moral, and physical agencies that are classed under the generic names of **PLEASURES** and **AMUSEMENTS**! They are so intimately connected with us in all the relations of life, and occupy so much of our time, thoughts, and attention, that any error in relation to them cannot be otherwise than productive of infinite mischiefs. If a mere mote may be so misplaced as to introduce even disorder and pain into the whole bodily system of man, what may not pleasures and amusements do, if equally misplaced? When we consider that the pursuit of these was the great *business* of our lives during its earliest and most important period, when our characters and constitutions were in process of formation, and that they will, in all human probability, continue to be the business of the young until the end of time — that they always have had, and always will have, a place in the social economy of man, — it seems not only highly proper and useful, but absolutely necessary, that we should examine their claims to our fostering care, and that we should determine, as well as we can, their exact place in the economy of nature.

Such is the design of this work ; but whether the design will be accomplished is entirely a distinct matter. It is enough that it seems to be a matter of sufficient importance to warrant a trial. Before entering upon the subject, however, I beg leave to premise that the word **AMUSEMENT** is so suggestive of the light and sportive, that I am fearful lest the reader should be expecting something of that kind in the treatment of this subject. I have myself suffered so often by selecting books with what are called "taking titles," that I cannot help sympathizing deeply with that deluded class of readers ; and hence I file a *caveat*, in the outset, admonishing the adventurous reader that there is no more necessary connection between pleading for amusements, and the present realization of enjoyment, than there is between "thinking on the frosty Caucasus" and experiencing the sensation of coldness. In fact, the tendencies of the subject are rather polemical, metaphysical, and theological than otherwise, and hence not a little difficult to handle in any thing like an attractive manner. I shall struggle hard, however, to escape from the interminable labyrinths of

metaphysical and other similar discussions; but if I should happen to be drawn into the dark mazes of their too often subterranean researches, where the reader does not dare or care to enter, I hope he will not turn back in despair, but that he will leave me to grope there as I may, and stand ready to join me, when I emerge, farther on, where the route is more consonant to the taste of an amateur reader.

If the reader will only observe this latter direction, I have no doubt but that we shall jog along together quite comfortably for the remainder of the journey, and part, at the end of it, without any serious misunderstanding. Perhaps we may fall out occasionally by the way, and get a little warm, as the best of friends oftentimes do, over some knotty point in ethics, or over some passage implying a sad want, on my part, of reverential homage for old, time-honored, and veteran sects, institutions, principles, and prejudices, that sages originated and sages have sanctioned; but I am in hopes that we shall agree so often, and in relation to so many important matters, that our points of difference will, after all, seem to be more in

theory than in substance. But, should it turn out to be otherwise, and should the reader find principles here advanced that he feels obliged to deem mortal heresies, let me hope that good, even, may come out of that, and that the subject may find a champion in him ; and that thus he will be provoked to do what any one may accomplish so easy, write a better work in its stead. With these apologies for the work and the subject, I enter upon the more appropriate and pleasing duties to which the subject gives rise.

WE are subject in life to two great classes of emotions—those of pleasure and those of pain. Those emotions may spring from within or from without ; they may proceed from the mind or from the bodily senses. We may be pleased or pained by a look, a word, or a thought, as surely as by heat and cold, and sweet and bitter, and the other thousand and one outward agencies. But however those feelings may arise, they determine our happiness for the time being. They are antagonist principles ; and accord-

ing as the one or the other prevails, in the case of any of us, our life is made happy or miserable.

Considered in this light, **PLEASURE** is a word of very broad signification. It embraces every thing that ministers to our happiness, whether of a serious or gay and light nature. Hence we have the pleasures of labor, as truly as the pleasures of recreation; the pleasures of solitude, as well as the pleasures of society; the pleasures of the house of worship, as well as those of the house of feasting.

All of those aids to pleasure that are of a light and airy nature are denominated **AMUSEMENTS**. The name comes from the Latin *musa*, a song, signifying to allure the attention lightly, like a song. Amusements are only one of the thousand classes of aids to pleasure. There is embraced under the head of amusements all those entertainments, diversions, sports, recreations, pastimes, games, and plays, that belong to the light, cheerful, and sportive employments of our powers of body and mind, in distinction from those that are laborious and serious.

In discussing the propriety of fostering

amusements, we are led, very naturally, to inquire what is the design of our being. For which of these two states of mind and body are we intended? Are we created for happiness,—and are all the arrangements of the world designed to serve that great end? — or is it the reverse? Is happiness, or misery, the natural state of man here below?

Without attempting, in this connection, to discuss these questions, I propose here to consider the origin of the present hostility to pleasures and amusements. I think that we shall see that it has arisen, in a great measure, from false views of the design of our being, and erroneous religious theories, adopted centuries ago.

We possess in the Holy Scriptures the only reliable, if not the only history of man in the early ages of the world. We have there the history of the Jews, the most favored nation of the world, drawn with all the minuteness of shade and coloring that truth and inspiration could give it. In tracing the history of that wonderful people, while under the divine government, we find nothing indicative of ascetic or monastic principles among them, until we reach the

time of the Pharisees, some two or three centuries anterior to the Christian era. We find numerous feast days established, and commanded to be kept, but few or no fast days. We find a multitude of seasons set apart for rejoicing, while but one day set apart for "afflicting their souls." That was the day of atonement.* We find the tendency of the whole feast-day and holy-day economy was to bring the people together in social worship and rejoicing, but nothing tending to drive them asunder and into solitude; —no penances; no tortures; no self-inflections; no command to appear before the Lord sorrowing and afflicted; but we find them commanded, again and again, to "rejoice before the Lord."

The first intimation we have of any sect avowing principles hostile, in any degree, to a rational enjoyment of the pleasures and amusements of the world, occurs among the sect of religionists well known under the name of Pharisees. They appear to have adopted a system of religious belief, founded partly on the Scriptures, and partly on tradition, that made heaven the reward of earthly

* Lev. xxiii. 26, 27.

trials and sorrows. Hence they imposed upon themselves the observance of certain vows, more or less rigid and onerous, according to the disposition of the devotee. Those vows were generally directed against indulgence in the common enjoyments of life, imposing upon themselves and their followers, as our Lord in one place speaks of them, "heavy burdens."

The members of this sect were prodigious antiquaries, and, not content with the Scriptures as they were, pretended to the possession of a fund of traditional lore, (*dictums* of Moses, their great lawgiver,) directed mostly against the pleasures and amusements of life. Hence they fasted often, and made long prayers, and announced a new way to heaven, viz: through self-imposed tribulations and tears. They were, also, very gifted in determining the character of objects by outside appearances. Hence they were very careful about the exterior. In fact, the Pharisees believed in the sovereign virtue of good looks, and hence held to scouring the outside of platters, and whitewashing the outside of sepulchres, at all events, while their practice indicated the belief that the cleansing of the

interior might safely be dispensed with ; though, to do them justice, I believe they did not insist upon their followers avowing this as any part of their creed. As they always kept the outside in good trim, they did not mind being stared at a little by the lower orders, and, it is hinted, rather courted it than otherwise, and hence figured largely at the corners of streets and in market-places.

A century or two after they broached this new doctrine, a new sect arose, who contended that it was the *inside*, and not the *outside*, that needed purification. This new sect taught that the heart was the seat of health or disease ; that there is no purity nor piety without supreme love to God ; and that herein is included love for all his works. Hence they taught that true believers would love each other, and seek and enjoy each other's society ; that they would "look through nature up to nature's God ;" and that hence every beauty, bounty, and delight of nature would be a helper, around which the affections would cling, and twine, and grow, till they blossomed in heaven.

This was a new and strange doctrine to the Pharisees, to which they could not sub-

scribe, but looked upon it as rank heresy. They considered it entirely fanatical and absurd to pay so much attention to the unseen. True, the new sect contended that the cleansing of the interior would as naturally produce a cleanly exterior, as would an internal fire serve to warm the extremities ; but this was providing for the entire purification of the vessel, which was, as they thought, carrying things to extremes.

The first objection that was taken by the Pharisees to the new sect, was founded on this very subject of enjoying the pleasures of life. The first teacher of the new doctrine came neither eating nor drinking, and the old sect observed it, and said he had a devil ; that is, he was too ascetic — he was carrying it too far — or, in other words, outdoing them, and they denounced him at once. But John the Baptist was followed immediately by his Master, who came eating and drinking like other men. He was present with his disciples at a marriage festival, at Cana of Galilee, — which, according to the custom of the Jews, was celebrated with great rejoicings, — and partook with Zaccheus at his hospitable board. He was eminently

social in his habits and character, as is evidenced by his drawing around him a retinue of attached disciples. All this was carefully noted by the Pharisees; and they denounced him as "gluttonous, and a wine-bibber," and charged him with being "a friend of publicans and sinners;" that is to say, they charged him with indulging in the bounties of Providence and in social delights, and denounced him for it.

The difference between the creed of the Pharisees and that of Christ and his apostles seems to be, that the former required their disciples to *appear* holy, while the latter required theirs to *be* holy. The former depended on appearances, the latter on what they *were*. The former had no suspicion that there was any thing wrong or perverse in themselves, but stood in great distrust and fear of the influence of outward objects upon them, such as the beauties and bounties of nature, the pleasures of society, and the amusements of the world, and hence they hated and shunned them; while the latter taught that the seat of moral disease was in the heart of man, and that, if *that* was corrected and purified, all of God's works would

harmonize with it. The Pharisees feared the world ; the followers of Christ feared the deceitfulness of their own hearts. The former impliedly taught that God had made the world *all wrong*, so that there was a temptation and a snare in every thing around us, from the tender beauty of the flower to the stars that shine in splendor ; while the latter were taught that every thing that God had created was, in truth, as he had pronounced it, "very good," but that man had "sought out many inventions."

A few centuries after the Christian era, the Pharisaical doctrine reached its utmost limit in the establishment of an order of ascetics who were dissatisfied with nature as it was, and insisted that this world was no place for them ; that it was an entire mistake in putting them here ; and hence shut themselves up in monasteries and nunneries to correct the evil as far as they could. The plain import of their language was, "The world is all very well if it is intended merely to fit us for perdition ; but it is plain that we can never fit ourselves for heaven in such a place as this. There is too much that is tempting and alluring in the bright drapery

of the heavens, in the gaudy furniture of the earth, in the rich bounties of nature, and in the social disposition of man, to leave room for heavenly contemplation and preparation. We are sorry, very sorry, that the world was not created better fitted to attain the great end of our being ; but, as it is, we see no other way than to make a little miniature world of our own, in the shape of a monastery. We will have it cold, dark, dreary, uncomely, inhospitable, and unsocial ; those, with a few torments of our own seeking, constituting, as we believe, the true outlines of a fit world for the training of our natures for a higher and better sphere of existence."

In accordance with these principles, the Christians of the middle ages were *speculatively* arrayed sternly against every thing in the nature of pleasures and amusements. Then, men were accounted pious, just in proportion as they were unconformed to nature. What they craved by nature, they were taught, must be shunned and hated. He who cut himself off from every thing that was dear to his heart did well ; but he who not only did that, but went farther, and imposed on himself grievous burdens and infi-

tions, did better. It was not so much matter with them that the way to heaven should be "straight and narrow," as it was that it should be thorny. They looked for joys in heaven just in proportion to the absence of all comfort and happiness here below. Hence the words *pleasure*, *amusement*, *joy*, *delight*, and *happiness*, were only synonymes of the word *sin*, as the words *self-denial*, *abstinence*, *mortification*, *penance*, and *self-infliction*, were synonymes of the words *grace* and *virtue*.

For more than ten centuries, such was the established creed of the whole Christian church. The genius of Christianity then appeared to men in the form of a grim-visaged monster, exiling and entombing living men and women, cutting them off from society, and from the comforts of life, and imposing on them painful mortifications of body, and comforting them with assurances of rewards in another world proportioned to the pains and sufferings endured here. For all that period, every thing in the nature of pleasures and amusements were regarded as deadly poisons to the soul; and penances, vows, and mortifications of the flesh, as the

only unfailing antidotes. The former were looked upon as in conspiracy against man's best good, and the faithful crossed themselves and shunned them as religiously as the pious Jews of old shunned a leper.

Such was the unnatural creed of the Christian church from about the fifth to the sixteenth century, with scarcely a gleam of light from any quarter to break the midnight of the religious darkness of that period, so fitly denominated the *dark ages*. Such was then the speculative belief of all Christendom. Of course, I shall not be understood, for a moment, as intimating that the people were any less given to indulgence in pleasures and amusements then than now. I only mean that the people were thus taught, and, no doubt, thus believed to a certain extent ; their practice, in view of such a creed and such a belief, will be illustrated hereafter. The path to heaven was then planted with briers, and skirted with brambles. It was even more beset with sorrows and afflictions than the famous pharisaical way of their ancestors. This latter was called the *Roman way*, which name learned philologists supposed to have been derived from the word

roam, which means to rove, range, stroll, wander, or to go loosely hither and yon, and is certainly admirably descriptive of the route which, we are credibly informed, many of the race of ascetics pursued in their pilgrimage to the heavenly city. The pious guides, it is said, during a great period of that time, were kind-hearted and merciful towards the poor pilgrims along their desolate way, and now and then indulged them in a little stroll in forbidden paths on satisfactory terms. But to prevent all avoiding on the road, and to bring all to account at last, a sort of half-way house, or purgatory, was established, where all the pilgrims were brought to a stand, and thoroughly examined, to the end that all their arrearages for roaming privileges should there be liquidated, and that thus they might be prepared to enter the gates of the heavenly city rejoicing, disburdened both of their sins and their money.

Such was the training of the Christian mind, for more than a thousand years, against pleasures and amusements, and every thing that could gladden the heart of man. The first great check to this unnatural warfare

upon the world, as it is, and man, as he is, was by the reformers under Luther. They struck a severe blow at this unnatural doctrine, but not a deadly one. They saw the folly and wickedness of the whole monastic system, with its penances, and mortifications of the flesh, and denounced it. But they did not denounce the principle that lay at the root of the system. They either did not see that the whole structure of asceticism was founded on a distrust of God's works, as a whole, as spread before them in the world, or else they shared in that sentiment with them. They, in effect, admitted the premises of the monastic orders, that the world was a dangerous and unfit place to live in, but contended that, on the whole, we were bound to try and make the best of it. They did not believe that the road to heaven was, with their own hands, to be strewed with briars and thorns to lacerate them, while at the same time they did not believe in beautifying and adorning it with the beautiful and alluring in nature.

This sentiment of distrust of the pleasing part of God's works has never been wholly eradicated from the Christian church, even

among the reformers. The old leaven of asceticism has never been entirely separated from the Christian religion among any sect. If monasteries are discountenanced, is the monastic principle entirely set aside as false? Is it thought quite consistent for a professor of religion to be as much in society after conversion as before, and as gay, cheerful, and joyous? I apprehend that a careful observer would find that the piety of most Christians is measured, in a great degree, by the near approach that they make to the ascetic state. The more they withdraw themselves from the pleasures and amusements of the world, the higher they rise in the estimation of the church. The more they disrelish earthly joys, — the less they can see that is lovely in the world, — the higher are they set in the scale of piety. In a word, I think I do no injustice to any religious sect, when I say that it is not expected that we are to be made, by conversion, more social, joyous, and happy, and more alive to all the pleasing parts of God's works, than before, but, on the other hand, we are expected to be less so. If we are changed at all, the tendency is expected to be towards asceticism.

We see in all this, good cause for the present prejudice against amusements. It is the growth of eighteen hundred years of constant teaching. The seed was sown by the Pharisees some two or three centuries previous to the Christian era; its growth was choked by the teaching of Christ and his apostles, but grew and flourished throughout the middle ages, and was only checked, not rooted out, by the reformation. The principle of distrust of pleasures and amusements had, at the time of the reformation, predominated so long, and so universally, and had become so interwoven with the whole structure of society, underlaying its very foundation, that nothing else could be expected than that our religious belief would come down to us tinged with it. We come legitimately by the prejudice. It has descended to us in a right line from the Pharisees, but, *not* by apostolic, but by monastic succession. It is not strange, then, that the prejudice exists among us; it would be strange if it did not exist.

With this religious prejudice against amusements, they have never occupied their legitimate position in the Christian community.

It is true amusements of all kinds have been enjoyed all this time by all classes, not omitting entirely those who were fiercest in denouncing them; but the very fact that they were *considered* sinful operated to *make* them so. They have seldom been devised, fostered, or directly countenanced by the religious part of the community to such an extent as to give them any very decided influence over them. That class have seldom or never, especially in our own country, made their own houses the scenes of any light and joyous entertainments. On the other hand, amusements have led a sort of gypsy life, hanging upon the outskirts of religious society, poaching now a little here and then a little there. Thrust from the presence and firesides of the religious, and those under their influence, there seemed to be no other places, for such enjoyments, but public halls, and saloons,—not the most fitting places to raise up pure, innocent, and healthy amusements. The effect of this system will be shown hereafter.

CHAPTER II.

**TREATS OF THE PROPRIETY OF ENJOYING THE
BOUNTIES OF PROVIDENCE.**

HAVING traced the pedigree of the present prejudice against pleasures and amusements, it only remains for us to consider whether it be a *mere* prejudice, or whether it is a well-founded hostility to them. The parentage of the prejudice may be a little against it, but not conclusive. However, for the present let us overlook the doubtful character of its ancestry, and consider it, not a prejudice, — for that may seem too much like begging the question, — but a *hostility* to pleasures and amusements, of good old Puritan stock. By that fiction we shall at least secure a “foeman worthy of our steel.” But before we attempt to run a tilt against this supposed hostility, let us be sure that such a feeling exists as a living, active, energetic principle, entering into and modifying all our religious and secular duties and enjoyments, and ex-

erting a controlling influence, for good or for evil, on the world.

That it does so exist is too palpable to be overlooked by the most careless observer. It is the great distinguishing feature between the religious man, technically speaking, and the man of the world. Men pass from the world into the church, without abating one hair's breadth of their devotion to the pursuits of ambition and gain. In most cases, the only change in their former pursuits is in their pleasures and amusements. They are as early, as late, and as eager, in the arena of distinction, or on the mart, as before, but less often, or never, at the festive board, and at public and private diversions. The new calls upon their time, made by their religious duties, are generally eked out from their hours of recreation and diversion, seldom from those of their business. The *hostility* to amusements, as it now exists, and especially among Protestants, is an abated, subdued, moderated one, in comparison with that of former times; but it is eminently practical in its character. It is a living, controlling principle, with the great body of Christians, no more inculcated than prac-

tised. So much is this so, that I would sooner engage to find you twenty church members, in some sects, that had broken some of the commands in the decalogue, than to find one who had ever entered a theatre, or who had participated in the dance, since taking upon himself the covenant obligations. I say this not as a matter of reproach, but as a matter of fact, illustrating the consistency of modern professing Christians in relation to the enjoyment of amusements.

If it is said that this consistency of professing Christians, in that respect, is a strong argument in favor of the principle thus inculcated, I can only answer, that I will find them devotees equally consistent in more than half the heresies of the world. Who so consistent as the Mussulman in his religious custom of bending the knee at certain hours, and turning his face toward Mecca? And yet I suspect no great argument could be drawn from it in favor of the divine origin or efficacy of the custom. Thousands of monks and nuns have lived and died far more consistent exponents of this anti-pleasure principle than any of the Christians of the present day, and yet without ever accomplishing so

much good on earth as has one volume of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, or Baxter's Call. It is no proof of the genuineness of a principle that its followers are consistent. If it were so, it would sometimes be difficult distinguishing the sheep from the goats.

Although these pages are, strictly speaking, intended only as a plea for amusements, yet I propose, in this connection, to consider the bearing that pleasures generally have upon us, in the important relations of life. I do this because amusements are only a subdivision of pleasures, and included in them. We shall be much better prepared to consider the subject of amusements after we have settled the question, in our own minds, whether this life was intended to be one of happiness or of pain and sorrow; whether we were designed to draw sweets, like the honey-bee, from every beauty and bounty of nature; whether we are, in our best estate here below, to grow happier and happier as we journey on, till there be scarce a boundary between the joys of earth and those of heaven; or whether life is truly "a vale of tears," "a state of probation," where all nature is leagued against us. It will aid our inquiries

materially if we can determine, to begin with, how far the bounties and delights of nature were created for our use and enjoyment; how far we may safely prize and enjoy them; and how far we may venture to indulge ourselves in the enjoyments of the social circle.

Although this subject has been so long before the world, yet I cannot find that it has ever elicited the careful examination of any one, either exalted or humble. I have no doubt that it has been discussed, in a very limited manner, thousands of times, in pulpit discourses, and other similar productions, but never with any pretence to master the subject. But, however this may be, with one exception, and that a manuscript sermon, I have not been so happy as to find even such treatises upon the subject, or indeed any thing claiming to discuss it.

This silence of theologians and moralists upon the subject might seem a little surprising, when we consider how very decided the opposition to pleasures and amusements has been, if experience did not teach us that the most stubborn prejudices are seldom founded on actual inquiry. In most cases, the careful

study of a subject moderates the passions of disputants, dispels many of their unjust prejudices, shortens the distance between them, and teaches them that it admits of something being said on both sides. Our present subject does not differ, in that respect, from others. It will not be here contended that there are no dangers to be apprehended from a participation in pleasures and amusements. I would not take so bold a position as that in favor of any thing, however good, since there is nothing without its evil as well as its good tendencies. I shall not contend but that the former are more liable to perversion than many of our more serious employments. The most that we can expect, or hope to do, is to ascertain the *natural tendency* of them, both generally and specially. It is only the *general result* that we are to look at. No sane man expects to find unmixed good. If the *general result* of *fostering* amusements is more beneficial than that of *discountenancing* and *discouraging* them, then they should be *fostered*, and not otherwise.

I propose, in the first place, to consider the propriety of enjoying the *bounties of Providence and the natural luxuries and delights of*

nature. I allude to all those natural beauties and bounties of earth, sea, and sky, that are calculated to contribute to the sentient delight of man. *I begin by remarking that all of these were created by an all-wise and beneficent Being, and strewed in the path of man, not to pamper, nor to pervert, but to feed his natural appetite, and make him healthier, happier, and better. They were created for his pleasure.* Man was made for happiness here, as well as hereafter. That is apparent in the whole design of creation. Pleasure is the designed offspring of animate and inanimate nature. While "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep," pleasure had no existence here below. Neither did it when God had said, "Let there be light," and had called forth the dry land, and clothed it with beauty, and set the firmament with stars. It was not until animate nature, until man was created, that pleasure had, or could have, a being below the skies. It required the union of the pleasing object with the pleasurable capacity and desire, to bring pleasure into life. Had the earth been created void of beauty, unfruitful, and nauseous, and had man, too, been created

as he *is*, pleasure would never have descended from his throne above to gladden the heart of man. Or, if the earth had been created as it is, and had man been created with no relish for its numberless beauties and bounties, still pleasure would have been here unknown. It was only by the creation of the world *as it is*, and man *as he is*, with that clear design *for each other*, and that clear adaptation *to each other*, that pleasure had, or could have, any earthly existence.

If every thing is not designed with a view to make man a happy, joyous being, why was the earth clothed with beauty? Why her magnificent canopy? Why her surface blooming with roses and bursting with verdure? Why her ever-varying features, her ever-changing hues, her treasures of beauty, her precious diamonds, and her glistening ores? Why was man created with an eye for all these beauties, and a heart keenly alive to all their charms, if they were not made for him and he for them? Why was all nature created vocal with melody? Why was it ordained that the hum of the insect, the song of the bird, the rippling of the streamlet, the sighing of the wind, the roar of the cataract,

the surging of the ocean, the waving of the forest, the low moan of the distant thunder, all, all should strike harmoniously on the ear of man, thrilling him with delight? Why this wonderful coincidence, if these melodies of nature were not designed to minister to and gratify a natural, innocent, and healthful desire? What other great end do these beauties and these melodies answer, worthy of the divine character and goodness? It cannot be supposed that they were created to tempt us, or to tantalize us. Such a supposition is too impious to be indulged for a moment. It is plain that they answer no end consistent with divine wisdom, unless they were created to add to the happiness of the human race.

Why, too, was the earth created pregnant with bounties, and the air and sea teeming with luxuries? Look for a moment at the actual wants of man. How limited! With pulse to eat and water to drink, a hut to shelter him, and skins to clothe him, all his actual necessities are supplied. These answer for his health. But see how far prodigal nature outstrips the mere necessities of life. See the cattle on a thousand hills, the never-

ending abundance and variety of the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field. Witness how the earth groans with the fruits and the luxuries of life. See her waving fields, her vine-clad hills, her orange and citron groves, her nectarines, and her thousand spices and sweets that tempt and delight the palate. Why is she laden with brilliant gems and precious ores? Why for us do the heavens distil fatness, and the insects gather sweets? And why are we created with a *relish* for all these providential bounties? Why are they scattered so profusely around us, unless provided for our use and enjoyment?

These are questions that suggest themselves at once to our minds, and we can see no possible purpose served by these rich bounties worthy of the hand that created them, unless they were designed as blessings to man. But we are not left to infer the purpose of God in storing the earth with these bounties. We have direct and positive evidence that they were expressly created *for* and granted *to* man.

This evidence is to be found in the very first recorded address of God to man. It is a

singular fact in the history of man, that there never have been wanting firm believers in the truth of the Scriptures who have questioned man's title to the good things of life, while, at the same time, they held the title-deed to them all the time in their possession. Hear the gracious language of enfeofment. "I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." After this we find that the same bountiful Benefactor planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put man, and commanded him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat," except of the tree of knowledge. Neither the disobedience of our first parents nor the sinfulness of the antediluvians changed the purpose of the all-wise Creator. What he had so freely conferred on Adam in the garden he confirmed to Noah, saying "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." Again and again in the sacred record is man commanded to rejoice in all that he put his hand unto, to rejoice before the Lord. And

when God threatened Israel for her sins, he said, “ Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies in hunger and in thirst ; ” plainly commanding them to receive all the bounties of Providence with grateful hearts and enjoy them. Thus were the bounties of nature bestowed upon man—bestowed for his use, certainly not to be *perverted* and *abused* by him.

It thus appearing, from the apparent testimony of Nature, that her bounties were intended to gratify and minister to certain natural desires of man, and it having been clearly shown, from God’s own word, that all these things were bestowed by him for man’s use and enjoyment, it only remains to show, from the universal history of our race, that these bounties have *proved* to be blessings, and not curses. No one will dispute but that six thousand years of experience ought to furnish some satisfactory proof of the duty and utility of enjoying the bounties of Providence. In that time their influence upon health and happiness has been fully tested.

If we begin with those works of nature

that serve to please and gratify the ear and eye of man, we shall have but little difficulty in convincing any one that the free enjoyment of those natural delights is highly elevating. Indeed, all our progress in civilization, in the arts and in the sciences, is only so much progress in the study of nature. It is seldom that one consults that open volume without deriving both improvement and enjoyment. So sensible are we of the influence of the works of nature on character, that we are led to expect, at once, certain traits of character in men bred under certain natural influences. This is illustrated in the manners and habits of those who inhabit the rough and boisterous ocean. We expect them to partake somewhat of the character of the element they inhabit. So, too, we look for a more hardy and fearless race of men amid mountain scenery, and in wild and lonely districts, than in the quiet bosom of rich and peaceful valleys. We expect to find the savage of the wilderness taciturn and gloomy, like the forests he inhabits; while, on the other hand, amid the gayeties of nature, in cultivated districts, like Southern Europe, we expect to see a gay, cheerful,

and happy people. It would shock the most unthinking to find an ardent admirer of flowers rude and unamiable, or a student of the planetary system "undevout." The true purpose of the works of nature, as seen and heard, appears to be, to teach us to know and love their Author, and all history and experience teach that that is their natural tendency.

The influence of natural scenery can best be learned from studying the history of those debarred from its enjoyment. How seldom is it that we find a criminal returning from his confinement with a heart as tender, and full of those heavenly sentiments of love, charity, and kindness, as when he entered! So, too, the history of the monkish orders goes to show that their seclusion served to make them hard-hearted, uncharitable, and cruel. It was they that founded the Inquisition, and that organized and carried forward almost all those dreadful persecutions that deluged the fairest part of Europe, for a long time, in blood.

If we turn to the consideration of the influence of the rich products of the earth upon us, we shall find that the testimony of his-

tory is equally favorable towards them. The first great fact in their favor is, that the free use of them is conducive to long life. This may be seen by a recurrence to very accurate tables, that have been made in England and other countries, giving the comparative duration of life at different times and among persons of different occupations. The average duration of life has, in every instance, kept pace with the extension of civilization. The average mortality in England, in 1801, was one in forty-four. Twenty years afterwards, during which time great strides had been made in all the arts and sciences, particularly those that add to the comfort of man, the average mortality was only one in fifty-eight. In France, in 1781, the average deaths were one in twenty-nine; in 1802, one in thirty; in 1823, one in forty. It is estimated that the duration of life among the easy classes of England, on an average, is twenty years more than among the same classes in Rome in the time of Pliny. Professional men live longer, on an average, than laboring men. Annuitants, who are sure of a comfortable subsistence, live longer than either, while those classes who have all the

luxuries of life entirely within their reach live to a still greater average age. Perhaps there is no class of people in the world who live to a greater age than the nobility and gentry of England; and certainly no class in the world enjoys so many of the rich gifts of a bounteous Providence. It is a well-known fact that a series of plentiful seasons is always conducive to the general health of the people of all classes, while disease and death always stalk fearfully in the train of scarcity and want. The operative classes in England, and the great body of the population of Ireland,—the latter the most scantily clothed and the worst fed people on earth,—have but few aged persons among them, in comparison with the better fed classes in their own and other countries.

We also find that the free use of the bounties of nature improves the general appearance of the human race. It is certainly no small thing so to use the gifts of Providence as to develop the human form in its loveliest estate. Nothing in the animal economy is better established than that the free *use* (not abuse) of the bounties of Providence, both as to food and clothing, are essential to

the full and perfect development of the human system. Want dries up the fountains of life, and withers and stunts a people until they dwindle to pygmies, while plenty, diffused generously among them, shows itself legibly in every feature and in every limb. A well-fed people are generally well developed, and seldom fail to improve in stature. The best fed people, in Europe, are the privileged classes, and they furnish, generally, by far the best specimens of the nobility of nature. Of these privileged classes, the English nobility, as I have before observed, perhaps enjoy the luxuries of life in the greatest profusion; and they undoubtedly have a greater proportion of large, healthy, well-formed men and women than any other class, of the same number, in Europe.

But the free use of the good things of nature conduces to good morals, as well as long life and personal beauty. So says history. So says experience. Nothing is better settled than that a season of want, in England, (and the same is undoubtedly true of other countries,) is characterized by a frightful increase of crime. A well-fed people are generally peaceable, quiet, and contented. Gen-

erally speaking, it is the necessitous and the starving that give themselves over to any and every immorality. The history of all the great sieges, from that of Jerusalem to the present day, shows that immorality and licentiousness increase with scarcity and want. It is well known that no sooner does Want show his haggard face in the French capital, than ten thousand new crimes and immoralities begin to appear, breaking down all law, all order, and all shame. The criminal calendar of all countries will show that our houses of correction and penitentiaries are filled, almost exclusively, with those who stepped from society into those abodes the victims of want, and too often houseless and homeless. It is seldom that one who has around him the rich stores of nature in abundance subjects himself to the penalties of the law. The keys of the prison-house are so seldom turned on such, that, when it does occur, it creates that astonishment that proves more clearly than any thing else its infrequency.

The inhabitants of the civilized portions of the earth enjoy the greatest number of the bounties of Providence, since it is the

civilized only that glean them from all quarters of the globe. The barbarous content themselves with what luxuries nature lavishes around them, within reach of their hands. The higher the civilization of a people, the more fully do they enjoy the entire luxuries of the world; while the lower the degree of barbarism, the more entirely are they cut off from them. If the bounties of Providence are ensnaring and corrupting, then would the highest degree of civilization become the most dangerous and corrupting, and the lowest barbarism the most free from ensnaring and polluting influences. But no one will, for a moment, contend for such a theory, except the most daring visionary.

We have not only the history of those who have been denied the luxuries of life, by *necessity*, to guide us in our inquiries as to their influence, but we have also the history of those who have abstained from them from *choice*. The first instances we have of any class of people who have openly taken the ground that the bounties of nature were to be shunned, are furnished, as before alluded to, in the dogmas of the Pharisees. Since their day, there has always been a large body

of men who distrusted the good things of life, as temptations thrown in their way to lead them from duty. This distrust has shown itself in numerous ways, but most prominently in the monastic institutions. They had their origin in the belief that all the pleasures of life were corrupt and corrupting, and that there was no safety but in vows of poverty, abstinence, chastity, and penance. The influence of these principles, taught, believed, and attempted to be carried out, has now become matter of history. It embraces a period of time amply sufficient to test the principle.

The pharisaical doctrine of distrust of every thing that gladdened the eye, or tempted the palate, had its origin a few centuries previous to the Christian era. It increased slowly, but surely, during the first two or three centuries after that time, but did not, until later, show itself in the form of monastic vows, seclusion, and asceticism. The early Christians, apostles, and martyrs were no ascetics. Theirs was a life of active toil, in the world, partaking of its joys, and sharing in its sorrows. It was not until about the fifth century that the good seed

sown by the apostles became choked with monastic institutions. Simultaneous with the foundation of those orders of ascetics, who scorned all of the pleasures of life, commenced the dark ages. Those dark ages grew more dark and appalling as the ascetic spirit prevailed, and strengthened itself among the people, until Europe was covered with the pall of death. Christianity then consisted in hating every thing lovely and tempting that God had created, and in rejecting all his choicest blessings as deadly foes. He, then, was the most pious man who enjoyed the least of God's blessings, and had the least to thank him for: hence the great object was, to hide himself from the works of Nature, and abstain from all her bounties, hate the world and all that was in it, and make life as miserable as he could. It was the same principle that is now held by those who teach hatred of the world and its joys. The only difference between them is, that the former took a more effectual way to carry out their principles.

But the influence of asceticism was not merely negative. It had its positive influences upon the world. As soon as the peo-

ple began to withdraw into monasteries, and reject all the bounties of nature, they began to become superstitious, idolatrous, and infidel. The natural effect of their doctrines, that all the bounties of Providence were corrupting, was to discourage enterprise in every thing that tended to multiply the products of the earth, or the means of happiness ; hence business was stagnated — every thing was neglected — the man with the least wants was esteemed the most pious. Where there are few wants, there are few incentives to labor, so that in those days the most pious were the most indolent. The example of the monastic orders was contagious, and the whole period of asceticism was an age of indolence, and hence of ignorance and blindness.

The indolence of the monks soon led them to adopt mendicity ; and hence begging was exalted into a virtue, and half of Europe became, by the evil example of asceticism, beggars. Withdrawn from all the softening influences of natural bounties and social delights, the monastic orders soon became stern and unyielding bigots and persecutors, such as the world never saw before, and will never see again while man continues within the

sphere of nature's influences. The sternest haters of the joys of life have always been the most bitter persecutors.

But the darkest feature in the principle of asceticism remains to be told. It was the very parent of immorality and licentiousness. When God cursed the ground, it was for man's good. It was not to prevent him from harvesting rich stores of blessings from the earth, but that he should obtain them by diligent toil. God saw that man, in his fallen state, could not bear a life of idleness; and hence the ground was cursed "for man's sake," that is, for his good. A life of indolence conflicts with the highest interest of man, and leads directly to vice. The dark ages were characterized by the grossest immoralities; and the monastic orders, in that respect, led the way. Then, and now, wherever asceticism exists, there, in the same degree, exists sensuality. All history confirms this, as the natural result of a life of indolence and seclusion.

The reformation broke the midnight darkness of that ascetic age, and let in the light of Nature, with her millions of gifts and blessings, and all Europe awaked as from a sleep.

Once more mankind began to believe that religion consisted in something besides a fruitless contest with nature; and that the sky, earth, air, flowers, fruit, social and festive delights, were for their enjoyment. Once more they looked through Nature up to her Creator and Author, instead of peering darkly through pictures, beads, and relics, up to virgins and canonized saints. It was the conversion of men from bead, skull, crucifix, picture, and man worship, to the worship of the true God as seen through his unnumbered works and unnumbered blessings.

Just so far as the false and impious doctrines of hatred of the world and scorn of its joys were broken, just so far, and no farther, did the reformation extend. Just so far, and no farther, did Europe recover from her torpor, her ignorance, superstition, cruelty, irreligion, and licentiousness. The light of the reformation never penetrated the thick darkness of Italy and Spain; and there, where the old doctrine of asceticism still prevails, ignorance, vice, and superstition still prevail. I would not be understood to say that in that ascetic age, or in ascetic countries now, the people seek the pleasures of

the world any less than they do in other countries. The difference consists in this—that in the former their religion consists in denying themselves the joys of life. Hence, when they have been guilty of any sin, they fast and do penance; and that, they believe, cancels the debt. It is with them as if a child should mock and deride his father, and then, as an atonement, go supperless to bed, again to deride and again to do penance. The unbeliever in asceticism, on the contrary, counts not upon his abstinence from innocent enjoyments as expiatory of sin, but depends on repentance and faith. The difference is in the two principles and their effects; those adopting the one, enjoying the blessings of life openly, freely, and thankfully, as from the hand of a father; those adopting the other enjoying those blessings covertly, as forbidden fruits, unthankful,—and, perhaps, with secret curses in their hearts that they are subjected to such self-denial; and then surlily doing penance to expiate the sin. Both partake of the same blessings, but with far different *feelings* towards the bountiful Giver.

“But sin *is* committed,” says the ascetic,

“in the pursuit and enjoyment of the luxuries and pleasures of life.” True. But it is in the *excessive* use of them; in the *excessive* love of them; in the *excessive* indulgence in them. Excess in any thing is bad. There is nothing in the whole circle of providential blessings so good but that it may be carried to *excess*, or *perverted*. A person may misuse the faculty of speech, and slander his neighbor; but it furnishes no reason for hating and disusing that faculty. The bounties of Providence and pleasures of life are not corrupt, but our *pampered appetites*, our *perverted tastes*, that misuse them. It is the latter that are to be denounced and guarded against, not the former.

CHAPTER III.

TREATS OF AMUSEMENTS, AND THE TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF THEM DRAWN FROM NATURE.

AT length, indulgent reader, after so long a time spent in grave preparation for considering the subject of **AMUSEMENTS**, I am re-

joiced that all is now ready for taking it up in good earnest. Perhaps you think I might have spared you all this mighty din of preparation, and entered upon it at once; but do pray consider that I am charged with the defence of the whole tribe of amusements, great and small, who, as you have seen, have been about the same as under indictment these two thousand years, accused of having committed, first and last, about all the offences described in the criminal calendar, and that no prudent attorney would think of hazarding a trial until he had obtained a list of the witnesses who supported the accusation, had been advised of the law under which they were accused, and had carefully looked it up and thoroughly examined it. It will be seen at once, how important it is to obtain such information before proceeding in the case, since, in that way only can any one hope to fairly meet the prosecutor's case, and prevent the accused from suffering under testimony, incompetent, fictitious, or prejudiced, or under mere pretence of law, or under statutes that are misunderstood or perverted.

But let it not be thought that, because I

have appeared for amusements generally, I am about to plead for the whole race of them, right or wrong, guilty or innocent, and try to save every mother's son of them from correction at any rate. Not so, gentle reader. I am no such servant of theirs, and have no such guilty retainer in my pocket. So far am I from that, that I am rather a volunteer in their cause, and appear for them merely because I believe that, in their case, the innocent have been confounded with the guilty, and that mankind are now suffering in consequence of the false and erroneous views that they have entertained, and are entertaining, in relation to many of them. Hence it will be my object to see that justice is done them, rather than to get them acquitted of all blame ; and to separate the innocent from the guilty. The most I expect to do is to get the most of them acquitted of the great leading charge against them, of being *naturally sinful*, and in *conspiracy* against the highest interests of man ; and to show that, instead of that, they are the natural allies of our race in training us physically, morally, intellectually, socially, and religiously, for happiness here and hereafter.

If you answer, "All that is very well; but why lug pleasures into the controversy?" I must beg you to remember that they, as the great ancestors of amusements, were accused with the latter, and hence, although I do not appear specially for them, yet as a tree, it is said, is known by its fruits, so fruit, sometimes, is known by the tree from which it is gathered; and hence the propriety of beginning at the root, and vindicating the character of the very seed from which amusements sprung. Like a prudent general, I could not think of so far violating the rules of war, as to take possession of a mere redoubt of the enemy's works, and proceed to fortify it, and leave them in quiet possession of the citadel that overlooked and commanded it. Hence it was that I explored earth, air, sea, and sky, and found them teeming with bounties, and endeavored to show that they were all created for man's use and enjoyment, and are his allies, in the same sense in which I contend amusements are. Having thus, as I believe, found all outward nature designed to make man happier and better, we are left more at our leisure to look at the only remaining question, and see how far

social intercourse is improving to those who employ it.

Turning, then, naturally from our relations to outward nature, to the consideration of our relation to each other, we inquire whether we were made to enjoy the society of our fellow-men, and be benefited by it; or whether we are so constituted that it is for our best good to shun it. How far are we authorized to spend our time in social intercourse; in social amusements; in the light-hearted diversions of the family and social circle; in holiday, field, and rural sports and games? We inquire whether the free indulgence in such enjoyments is improving or debasing; whether their *natural* tendency is to make us better or make us worse. In this inquiry, we have nothing to do with their *unnatural* tendencies — with the perversion of them; because we know that *every thing*, and amusements among the rest, may be perverted. If nothing is to be enjoyed that is capable of perversion, the ascetics were right in selecting the cloister as the next best retreat to that only safe one from such influences, the grave.

We have seen that the ascetics of the mid-

idle ages aimed a deadly blow at social pleasures, as well as sensual. Some of the most stringent vows of the monastic orders related to abstinence from social enjoyments. Indeed, that was a cardinal point in most of their creeds. The ascetics counted more, as a general thing, upon the efficacy of seclusion from society, as a means of spiritual improvement, than upon all other influences put together. They taught, and no doubt believed, that the *natural tendency* of social intercourse was corrupting. The early reformers denounced monastic vows and institutions, but held fast to the principle that lay at the bottom of them. They still seriously distrusted social amusements. That feeling, to a greater or less extent, has always existed. It is not to be doubted but that the great body of Christian parents have very generally regarded social amusements, to a certain degree, in the same light, and felt that their children were less safe in society than out of it. I think I am doing them no injustice when I say that they now look upon such amusements as rather to be *borne with* than *fostered and encouraged*; as something that young people *will have* but that the *less* they

have of them the better ; in a word, that they believe that the *natural tendency* of those amusements is injurious.

Is this distrust of the tendency of social intercourse and social enjoyments well founded ? That is a question, under any circumstances, that it would be well for every person to be able to answer. To that end, let us, with all candor, examine the question by the lights that we possess. What is the natural tendency of social intercourse ; of social amusements ; of the various social diversions ; of holiday amusements ; of dancing ; of singing ; of visiting ; of social games ; of field sports ; and the thousand and one other similar enjoyments ? That we may not become confused in discussing these questions, we must confine ourselves to the discussion of the *governing principles* and *general tendency* of social intercourse first, and then consider the tendency of particular amusements afterwards.

In pursuing the general inquiry whether the tendency of free social intercourse with one another is elevating or not, we are naturally led to inquire, in the first place, how far we seem intended by our Creator for such

intercourse. We are led to inquire what capacities of heart and mind we have for it. Do we seem better fitted for society or for solitude? Do we seem happier in society than out of it? What is the law of our nature in that respect?

Those questions are easily answered. We do evince the strongest natural desires for society; and to show that this is not an acquired sentiment or taste, we have only to point to the infant. The moment the eyes of the child are opened to consciousness, he craves society, and testifies the most intense distress when threatened with the shortest period of solitude. This cannot be said to proceed from fear, because we see this principle exhibited in the child before he can have learned that there is any thing at war with his happiness. This love of society, and fear of solitude, reigns throughout the whole period of childhood. Children fly to companionship as the bird to her young. They are never so happy as when in society, and never so unhappy as when condemned to solitude.

In all this the child is father to the man. As we grow older, it is true, our taste for society apparently decreases; but this proba-

bly arises more from the engrossing cares of business, leaving us less time for such enjoyments, than from any positive change of feeling. So, too, our social enjoyments and tastes are narrowed by pride, and policy, and a thousand things that never enter the minds of the young. Indeed, it is but little that we can learn of the real nature of man, after he has become enlisted in the pursuits of the world, so much are his character and habits the result of circumstances. Childhood is the only proper place to study human nature. There is the place to learn the great first principles of our nature, and separate them from mere customs and habits. Children follow their natural propensities; men, their habits and their interests. The former choose what they love; the latter, what is customary. The first act from the impulse of nature; the latter, too often, a borrowed part. It is the nature of us all to love society, all through life; and if we find any one, however aged, who is apparently an exception to that rule, we shall always find that, in that respect, his nature has become perverted by some great controlling cause. Indeed, I doubt whether any man, however ascetic, ever

joined in innocent social enjoyments without giving tokens of receiving benefit from them in lighting up his countenance, warming his heart, and making him more affable, kind, and thoughtful for the happiness of others.

Why is it that we are launched on the sea of life with this craving for social amusements, if they are dangerous and vicious? Why is it that the passion for them is the strongest in our youth, when we are confessedly less selfish, less worldly, less hardened, and less sinful, than in the later periods of our life? Why is it that the season of our greatest love and enjoyment of social amusements is that of our greatest warmth of heart and susceptibility to grateful and devotional feelings? The answer is a plain one. It is, that social amusements, when pursued naturally, have a tendency to keep the heart warm, and open to the best feelings and sentiments of our nature.

We are told that "to every thing there is a season;" and in the divisions of the day we find a fit and appropriate season for amusements. The darkness of night is appropriately allotted to sleep; the quiet serenity of morning's first dawn is the fit and hallowed

moment for pure, heartfelt, and unclouded devotion ; for the toils and avocations of life we are given the light and warmth of the sun, while the gentle beams of the twilight, the soft breezes of evening, and the happy reunion of those whom the well-spent toils of the day have parted, mark it as the season for mental and moral culture, and for warm-hearted, cheerful amusements. It was never intended that the toils of life should extend into the evening or the night, and I may as well say here, lest I should omit it in a more appropriate place, that this natural allotment of time cannot be violated for any purpose without serious injury to those who violate it. It robs them of one of the choicest periods of the day ; it takes time that belongs to our moral, social, and intellectual natures, and bestows it, too often, on mere animal labor, to help hoard a little more dross for some one. If he is a parent, the time should be sacred to his family, as well for his as their enjoyment and improvement ; if he is a youth, the time belongs to the cultivation of those powers of his mind and heart, for which no wealth or honors can compensate. In a word, it sacrifices the more lofty aspira-

tions and powers to the least worthy of all,—the hoarding of money,—and the legitimate fruit of thus sacrificing one class of duties to another is the production of social infelicities and disorders.

We learn from nature that every thing in her economy is formed upon the principle of variety and change; that nothing, except the great laws by which matter and mind are governed, is unchangeably fixed. Nature has its successive seasons, and its alternations in every thing, from wet to dry, from heat to cold, from light to darkness. All the vegetable creation has its alternations, its budding, its blossoming, its fruit season, and its apparent decay, again to revive, and bud, and blossom, as before. All the animal kingdom has its alternations, more or less mysterious and strange, always changing, never at rest. There is nothing in nature that seems calculated for, or destined to, an unalterable state of repose. So far from that, every thing seems predisposed to change. Such is peculiarly the condition of man. A state of rest with him is a state of death. As long as life is in him, there is continual alternation. Man is a harp of “thousand strings,” and per-

haps throughout his whole life those finely-toned chords are never tasked twice precisely alike. The changes in Nature keep her bosom always warm and bursting with blessings; and to the never-ending changes of the human mechanism we are indebted for its keeping in tune so long. He who attempts to hold his arm, or even his finger, in one position for any length of time, will soon learn that continual change is the law of nature.

Every thing in nature requires, at stated periods, a certain degree of repose. This is as apparent in the economy of the vegetable as in the animal kingdom. From the tenderest shrub to the mightiest oak, each has its season, when, as it were, the tide of life ceases, and seems for a while to slumber. Every thing living has its point beyond which its powers cannot be taxed with impunity.

Those who give themselves up to one pursuit, either of body or mind, wear out much sooner than those whose pursuits task every day, more or less, all their faculties. The insane on one subject wear out in a very few years: so do the highly gifted,

who bend all their faculties to master some one object. The same system of alternations is required to keep the mind healthy as to keep the body so; in fact, they are so intimately connected that the one cannot be diseased and the other not sympathize with it. Man needs at times to be gay as well as grave, and sometimes to be sad as well as joyous. The mind is as capable of stagnation as a pool of water. It gathers noxious vapors as truly as does the air. It needs, as they do, its correctives. The mind is always active, whether sleeping or waking; but it cannot always be intent on the same subject, for that would end in lunacy. When jaded over the pages of Euclid, it finds relaxation in Plutarch, Livy, or Hume; and when spent on history, replenishes its wasted strength in perusing the pages of the poet or the romancer. Each change tasks new powers and new susceptibilities, and gives the others opportunity to rest.

It is to meet the wants of beings thus constituted, that we are given a taste for amusements — those that are corporeal, to task otherwise unemployed and dormant powers of the body, and thus make us healthier;

those that are intellectual, to task otherwise unemployed and dormant powers of the mind, and thus improve, strengthen, and regenerate it ; those that are social, to task otherwise unemployed and dormant sensibilities of the heart, and thus make it warmer and more alive to generous impressions. In a word, we are given a taste for amusements, and we are given capacities to amuse, that we may gratify the one and use the others for the improvement of our healths generally, both of body, mind, and heart ; and if we do not gain those advantages from them, we pervert them, just as much as we do the fruits of the earth when we overload our stomachs with them, or distil from them noxious liquors to injure and destroy us ; and the amusements are no more in fault in the one case than the fruits in the other. In both cases, the fault is in the *abuse*, not in the *use*, of them.

CHAPTER IV.

TREATS OF THE TESTIMONY OF REVELATION
IN RELATION TO AMUSEMENTS.

WE have seen so much in what we have been considering that looks like design in the creation, on the one hand, of sources of amusement, and, on the other hand, of desires for them, that we turn very naturally and properly to revelation, to see if they are there recognized as a part of the divine economy in educating us for the great purposes of our existence.

We find that the first act of God, after the creation, was to establish a day of rest, a holyday. Thus early in the world's history was it divinely intimated that man was not made for labor alone, but that, with safety to his health, his morals, and his happiness, he could be intrusted with stated periods for relaxation. This was only the announcement of a principle of natural economy, fitted alike to bless man as an immortal being, as well as a member of the animal kingdom.

We shall see that the holyday principle embraced within it not only man, but all other living creatures. At that same eventful moment of time, when man was just entering on an untried existence, He who made him and all things announced the importance and necessity of the social principle to man, as a means of improvement in that recorded, sententious, and meaning sentence, "It is not good that the man should be alone."

These two great principles, thus early announced by Jehovah, we see fully carried out by him in the history of his dealings with the Jews. They had more than thirty holydays, which they were not only permitted but enjoined to keep, and this besides the seventh day, or fifty-two Sabbaths, which swells the yearly holydays to more than eighty. So far was the principle of relaxation carried, that every seventh year the people were commanded to abstain altogether from labor, and leave the ground untilled, and the fruit ungathered, and all nature to repose. In this sabbatical year, the people were not allowed to molest the fowls of the air, or the beasts of the field, but unconstrained liberty was granted to all.

We see, in this arrangement of divine wisdom, days, and even years, set apart for relaxation. The principle of setting apart certain days for relaxation is thus clearly shown to be of divine origin. The all-wise Creator saw that it was good for man to have certain periods of rest from labor. There was then a greater fear of the grasping avarice of man than of his sloth and indolence ; and who will pretend to question the reasonableness of that fear ? There is, I have no doubt, far more time misspent in hoarding, in some countries, than there is in spending. Then man was checked in his career of toil : now he is stimulated.

But were any of these days and years, that were set apart for rest, to be devoted to amusements ? That is the question.

On that point the testimony of revelation is clear and explicit. To be sure, if we had no direct and positive testimony to that point, we still should feel sure that some, at least, of those days were set apart for amusements, from several considerations. In the first place, there are certain of those days that the people were expressly commanded to keep holy. The Jews were commanded, for in-

stance, in keeping the feast of the passover, to keep the first and the seventh days holy, plainly implying that the intervening time was to be observed in a different manner. The question arises, How were they to keep those intervening days? They were to be assembled from all parts of Judea at Jerusalem. It would naturally be a season for the exchange of civilities among kindred and friends whom the avocations of life had separated. Would it not naturally be a season for social enjoyments? The same provision is observable in several of the other feasts, viz., the first and last days are set apart as *holy*.

But without attempting to reason further upon the question, I propose to show affirmatively that some, at least, of these days were set apart expressly for light-hearted, social amusements. Of this character were the feasts of the tabernacles, which lasted eight days, and which were the festivities of gratitude for the fruits of the vintage. Under our government, it would undoubtedly be thought going quite far enough for the government to set apart any number of days for amusements generally, without naming the kind;

and perhaps many would think it providing for a waste of time. But in the feast of tabernacles, a time for the enjoyment of amusements was not only set apart, but the amusements themselves prescribed. The command is, (Lev. 23: 39,) "In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generation. Ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths; that your generation may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." During these days, the Jews went forth into the fields, and dwelt in booths, as commanded. They arrayed themselves in the vines and flowers of the season, and accepted and gave

entertainments, and spent the time in hospitality, and in joyous games and amusements.

Several of our ancient holydays are unquestionably of divine origin. Such are our May-day, harvest home, and Christmas festivities. The time, and, perhaps, in some cases, the object for which they were observed, have been changed, but the amusement itself is not materially changed. Our rural May-day festival, in many of its features, seems to resemble the feast of tabernacles ; while in the command, "Thou shalt observe the feast days of weeks, of the first-fruits of wheat-harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end," taken in connection with the establishment of sheaf-offerings and other feasts, clearly indicate that our harvest home and Christmas festivities derive their origin from them. Indeed, our old Christmas festivals, when relieved of the follies that at some periods of time prevailed in connection with them, were but types of those so distinctly commanded in Scripture. Christmas has always been the favorite season for liberal bestowments upon the poor, generous hospitality, and family reunions. All of these virtues were enforced upon the Jews in the

command to use a certain portion of the fruits of their lands in social feasts, saying, "Thou must eat them before the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates; and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thy hands to."* These feasts were celebrated by the Jews after harvesting, answering somewhat to the time of our thanksgiving, and the old English Christmas, and were occasions of great hospitality and rejoicing.

So far was a free, fresh, joyous spirit inculcated, that every seventh year was set apart for rest and relaxation, and every fiftieth year for a year of "jubilee," when every bondman was set free, every debtor was forgiven his debts, and every possession reverted once more to its possessor. The very words made use of to denominate that year bespeak it a season of rejoicing, while we know that to the released bondman, and debtor, and to every man who once more returned to his

* Deut. 12: 17, 18. 14: 22—29.

own, it must have been a season for festivals, entertainments, and social games and amusements. It must, indeed, have been a year of "jubilee."

I shall have occasion, in subsequent parts of this work, to pursue this subject more in detail, and show that, in holy writ, not only are relaxations and amusements expressly provided for in general, and that certain ones are sanctioned in particular, but I shall go farther, and show that the all-wise Governor of the universe has seen fit to make it a law of our being, that the attainment of the greatest degree of bodily health, and the highest moral, religious, intellectual, and social culture, shall depend, in some degree, on the aid of daily amusements; and that, in accordance with that principle, the whole divine arrangement of our race into families, tribes, kindred, neighbors, friends, and countrymen, was designed to give us social organizations for our improvement, in that way, in common with the facilities afforded by them for other and equally important duties of life; and that such organizations do, when used for those purposes, produce the highest and happiest results.

CHAPTER V.

TREATS OF THE HISTORICAL TESTIMONY IN
RELATION TO AMUSEMENTS.

THE testimony of history, in relation to amusements, begins where that of nature and revelation leaves them. The latter only show that man was intended for a world full of sources of amusement ; that he was created with a high relish for them ; and that express periods of time were set apart for their enjoyment. As all this was the work of infinite wisdom, perhaps it may be thought that I pass by the greater, in the pursuit of the less, when I overlook the inference to be drawn from that great fact, and appeal to the results of experience ; but then there are so many theories about the fall of man, and his altered relations in that respect, that I choose to forego the advantages which that line of argument would seem clearly to give me, and base the arguments that I offer, under this head, on facts rather than inferences ; yet at the same time I would not have it forgotten

that almost all the scriptural provisions for, and sanctions of amusements are subsequent to the great era of the temptation.

In attempting to trace historically the influence of amusements on individual character, I am not insensible to the difficulties that beset the subject. The streams of our lives, as they flow on to the great ocean of the future, are so like those streams that feed the sea, made up of mere drops, and so added to, and filtered, and acted upon, through their whole course,—here trickling from fountains, there meandering through flowers; here rippling, foaming, and dashing over declivities, there winding through one and then through another and different soil; here exposed to intense evaporation, there gliding through dark and gloomy passes; sometimes eddying, sometimes direct, sometimes rapid, sometimes sluggish, sometimes deep, sometimes shallow, sometimes apparently sporting along the vale, and sometimes bearing burdens and toiling in the arts; constantly accumulating and widening with contributions from earth and from sky, from a thousand sparkling hill-side rills, from a thousand secret fountains, and from as many stagnant pools and sunken

bogs, till, deep and strong, pure, transparent, and healthful, or dark, turbid, and noxious, they are swallowed up in their natural graves,— who shall say in what stage of their course, just when, just where, just how they became impregnated with the pure or the impure particles that go to make up their character? Where imbued they the gases, the salts, the alkalies, that make them sweet or bitter to the taste? Though the task is a hard one, and to disagree in our conclusions is natural and to be expected, yet, if we but thread the shores of these winding and mysterious streams, noting here and there, as we go, their several tributaries, and their several and successive beds, and analyzing, step by step, their several properties, and the results of their several combinations, we may, at least, if our minds are open to conviction, hope to come out wiser than we began.

We all feel competent to pronounce upon the influence that certain religious systems have exerted upon certain nations. So, too, we find no difficulty in tracing the influence of common schools, Sabbath schools, the Bible, the printing press, free principles of government, and a hundred other things.

So the facts recorded in history enable us to trace, in some degree, the influence of amusements upon nations, cities, towns, villages, and individuals. Especially is this the case in respect to nations which have preserved an unbroken history for a long series of years, since, as we trace them along down the stream of time, and witness the change in their amusements, we can judge, from the change that followed in their condition, what influence those several amusements exerted.

I begin by saying that AMUSEMENTS are as old as time, and almost as universally diffused as light. All nations, both savage and civilized, have their amusements; and, in most cases, we find that they have national amusements, peculiar to themselves. Of such were the feasts of the Jews, the Olympic games of the Greeks, the gladiatorial shows of the Romans, the bull-fights of the Spaniards, the tilt and tournaments of the knights of Provence, and the rural festivities of Old England. Certain amusements we find pervading all nations and all classes. Such are dancing, singing, hunting, and the various domestic and field amusements.

There is abundant evidence to show that

we were made to be social beings, and that it was intended that we should derive, not only our chief enjoyment from that source, but also our chief improvement. We find such evidence, not only in nature, as revealed around us, and in the express provisions of holy writ, but in the whole economy of the great social, civil, and religious relations that are so clearly of divine appointment. The principle, so early announced, that "it is not good for man to be alone," seems to have been kept closely in view in those great organizations of society by which we are bound together in the social ties of family, kindred, religion, and country. By a law of our being, the moment we open our eyes to consciousness, we find a social organization ready to receive us, with open arms, in the family circle ; as soon as our young minds begin to blossom, the church welcomes us to its bosom in the tenderest of social relations ; and when we have reached manhood, town, city, state, and national governments, are all waiting to receive us into fellowship with them, and to send us forward to form new social relations for ourselves.

The great social relations of parents and

children, brothers and sisters, kindred and friends, neighbors and countrymen, were all conceived in the highest wisdom as a means to an end. They were intended to give to each, in those several circles, sources of improvement, in each of them, that no other means could supply. If there is one thing taught in history more clearly than another, it is the exclusive nature of the influence that each of those several circles exercises on the members who compose it. They are the successive institutions of learning through which we are ordained to pass in fitting us for the great duties of life; the family circle being the great primary school of them all, where there are rudiments taught that can be acquired nowhere else. So, through every step of those social organizations, studies are taught that are new, distinct, particular, and exclusive, that, if not learned there, are never learned any where; and if never learned, then our education is so far imperfect. As our circle widens, the ties that bind us together weaken, calling out new energies that had slumbered before, till, when we reach the outer circle, where we are left, almost literally, to stand alone, the whole energies

of our nature are summoned to duty like the last soldier in the turning crisis of the battle. We neither ourselves, nor do others, know what we are capable of until the occasion has been afforded to bring us out. Hence, he who thinks he is fulfilling all that even a "hard master" can expect of him while he cultivates his religious nature only ; or his intellectual only ; or his social only ; or confines himself in the cultivation of them to his own fireside ; or to the society of his own kindred ; or to that of his own select circle, — may have the credit of putting his talent to usance ; but it is to a limited one, that does justice neither to himself, nor to the world, nor to his Master.

If we consider a moment, we shall see, immediately, that it is only by mingling in society, and thus learning from one another, that we can hope to gain very much of the most useful, as well as the most necessary knowledge. It is only a small part of the really useful knowledge of life that we can gain from books. A man, brought up from the cradle to manhood without going into society at all, though he should master the whole Bodleian library, would still be a

boor, when he did venture into society, since he would still lack the faculty of pleasing others and making them happy. That is something that can never be learned from books. Practice alone can command it. The force of that proposition all my readers, at some time in their lives, undoubtedly, have as much felt as witnessed. And let it not be thought that all this is mere polish ; it is not so. While true politeness and grace can never be acquired except in society, so they can never be worn and exercised unless the heart has first been taught to respond, in some degree, to those great and generous sentiments that teach us to love our neighbors and seek to make them happy. The "art of pleasing" can only be exercised by those who, for the time being, feel the desire to please. The heart must be educated and improved before the manners are. In other words, our manners are only the outward exhibition of our inward cultivation. I do not say that a man with an educated, cultivated heart, in the sense in which I have here been using it, may not deny his better feelings, as well as his better culture, — as did Peter his Master, — and be selfish, and false to the claims

of virtue and duty ; but yet, all the while, he will be at war with those principles that his social culture has planted in his breast, and which will continually rise up, to torment him ; a familiar instance of which is contained in the history of one of the most accomplished but erring of the British poets.

I beg that no one will confound what I have been saying of gentility, and politeness, and the art of pleasing, and social culture, with the caricatures of those accomplishments, that are seen, too often, in society, offending, like tinsel ornaments, by the very baseness of the imitation. The authors of them are living proofs of the truth of the principle that I have been contending for, viz., that true politeness has its beginning and its seat in the heart, since it is the want of that precious, but invisible agency that drives them to imitate what is not capable of imitation, — heartfelt politeness, — but must be genuine, or nothing, but for which we ought no more to blame them than we do, in other cases, in natural history, where resort is had to imitation to make up for want of capacity. The old doctrine that nature abhors a vacuum was exploded long ago ; and hence there

is no reason why it may not be true that a man may be born with only an apology for brains or a heart, the same as he so often is for eyes or a tongue. Without them, he must imitate, or do nothing.

We are naturally led, in this connection, in the first instance, to consider the influence that amusements exert upon children, inasmuch as, in all ages and countries, without any exception, the childhood of our race has been almost supremely devoted to amusements. The pursuit of amusements is the business of children; they follow them as a hunter does the chase. They almost measure time by their amusements. Holidays are their eras, from which many a sage calculation is dated, and on which many a fond hope is hung. Their amusements are a combination of social, physical, and intellectual, and they seem equally happy in the pursuit of the one as the other; and yet who ever supposed that they exerted an injurious influence upon them? On the other hand, who does not know that those amusements are just as natural, and just as necessary to them, as the air they breathe; that they could no more grow up bright, cheerful, active, and

healthy, without them, than without daily nourishment. It has been said, by a great statesman, that we learn more in the first six years of our life than we ever learn afterwards. Where do we learn it? — where, but at our amusements? It is there we learn our first lessons, imbibe our first impressions, and contract our first friendships. We see the happy influence of amusements, not only in the way that has been mentioned, but in continuing to us that gushing warmth of heart, that simplicity and confidence, that so peculiarly characterize our childhood, and the retention of which is not only one of the greatest charms that we can carry with us through life, but has been presented by our Savior as the true type of the saint in heaven. There is nothing like good, cheerful, social amusements, to keep alive the feelings of childhood in the heart through all the stages of life. We are confessedly the most affectionate, the most confiding, the most alive to generous impulses, when we are the most engrossed with the innocent amusements of childhood. Children brought up without amusements soon lose all of those, their loveliest characteristics, and become

thoughtful, cold, calculating, and hardened in all the selfish ways of the world. It has been remarked by a late traveller through the manufacturing districts of England, where children are taken almost directly from the nursery into workshops and factories, to toil from week's end to week's end, with scarcely any intermission, except to eat and to sleep, that they appear like old men and women in miniature, and go about the streets with countenances as thoughtful, and apparently as burdened and perplexed with care, as their parents. That such would be the result of denying amusements to children is apparent. But it has been found by the British public, by observation, and further, by parliamentary investigations, that, by thus interrupting the great order of nature, and placing children at work when they should be at play, their growth is prevented, their faculties are palsied, their morals are debased, and their healths are undermined.

If the reader will follow out the idea in his own mind, that I have been attempting to convey, I have no doubt that he can find abundant examples in illustration of it among his own acquaintances. Who are those, among

your acquaintance, who are the most simple and childlike in their manners? who of them enter into your feelings, plans, hopes, and desires? who are at once free, frank, open, sincere, kind, affectionate, cheerful, generous, and hospitable, and seem to challenge the love of all whom they meet? Is it the man and the woman who keep aloof from society; who seldom or never see company themselves, and seldom or never let company see them; who have no fireside amusements; who will tell you that they have no taste for such things? No! you might as well look for those loveliest features of the human character within the cloister at once, as to look for them there. If you find all of those charms that characterize childhood, warming the heart and brightening the eye of those whose sun is declining, is it not generally those who have always been each the centre of social circles of their own, where you could not only dare to be merry, but where the influence was strongly to draw out every joyous sentiment in your heart, and make you diffuse it? Were not their houses the very abodes of hospitality, their firesides the scenes of daily amusements, their

doors the first to open to the social circle of your society, religious or secular, and the last to be closed against any thing that tended to innocent enjoyment?

It would not be difficult to illustrate this principle by abundant examples, drawn from history as well as experience. The men who have been the most celebrated for varied knowledge, and at the same time for childlike simplicity of manners and warmth of heart, have, in almost every case, been the very patrons, as well as the ornaments, of society. Socrates, who retained, in his old age, his youthful feelings and vigor, not only, practised singing and dancing, and the gymnastics taught at that period, but was a pattern of all the social virtues, even visiting the workshops of the mechanics, to engage them in social conversation for their improvement. Lucian, Virgil, Mæcenas, and Horace, all great patrons of social festivities, games, and sports, most of whom lived to a great age, and who all acquired unbounded fame, were mild and gentle in their dispositions, without pretension in their manners, constant in their friendships, and as vivacious and warm-hearted as children to the last. It is related of

Agesilaus, the Spartan prince and conqueror, so beloved by his subjects, adored by his army, and who, by his energy, valor, and influence, was the savior of his city at the age of fourscore, that he was not only so fond of light and cheerful amusements, but so simple and childlike in his manners, that he joined in the sports of his children, and once, when waited on by some of his courtiers, was found amusing himself and them by riding around the room on a stick. A somewhat similar anecdote is related of one of the most celebrated of the French monarchs, whom the Spanish ambassador once surprised, participating in the sports of his children to such an extent, that one of them was riding around the room on his back. If we come down to later times, we shall find history full of illustrations of the same principle. Frederic the Great, of Prussia, always devoted some part of every day, even in the face of the most adverse circumstances, to social amusements, to conversation, music, painting, and composition, one or all; and we find him, during a long and arduous reign, when his word was law, the friend and confidant of his subjects, to whom access was never

denied, whom they all approached without fear, and whom they all idolized. Numerous anecdotes are told of him, showing how completely he carried, to his extremest age, the simplicity of feeling, thought, and action, that characterizes the generous and lively sensibilities of youth. Franklin, and Fox, and Marshall, and a host of others, that might be named, are illustrious examples of the same rule.

Passing from the consideration of individual instances, examples of which might be cited to any extent, but which might be met, perhaps, by counter examples, which might seem to clash with them, I propose to demonstrate, as I think, that pleasures and amusements, when enjoyed in any thing like the right manner, are conducive to an individual improvement that can be obtained in no other way. Individual examples, taken in the light in which I view them, seem to me to furnish conclusive proof of the point I have made, but they may not carry the same conviction to other minds. I hope it will be carried along by the reader, all through this work, that I claim good and happy results from no impure sources. If the amusements

are immoral, licentious, or gross, their fruit will be the same ; and therefore I do not claim that individuals who may have cultivated and enjoyed (if the word is a proper one) such amusements all their lifetime, will exhibit the characteristics of youthful vigor — health, intellect, and vivacity. Far from it. That course is a warfare against nature, in one way, as a restricted, limited, or entire disuse of innocent amusements is in another way.

What we want in relation to amusements, to settle their character, is great general facts that all history sanctions. We must look around us, and see *who* employ amusements the most in their plan of life, and *where* they are employed the most : we must then compare those *people* and those *places* with those by whom and where they are employed the least.

It will be admitted, at once, that amusements of all kinds, religious, (if I may use the word in such a connection,) social, intellectual, and physical, abound most of all in large cities, and less and less as we recede from them, through towns, villages, and hamlets, till we come to a purely rural pop-

ulation, who enjoy less of them than most other classes. In cities, a large class of the population spend most of their evenings in the pursuit of one or the other of those just mentioned classes of enjoyment. There are circles connected with religious societies, for the social enjoyment of the benevolent ; social circles for the literary, and for the gay ; and there are places and modes of enjoyment for all ages, classes, characters, and conditions, in life. No doubt some of those amusements are very improving ; no doubt some of them are very debasing. My object, here, is not to draw the line, and say which belong to the one class, and which to the other, or which predominates, but to inquire, upon the whole, *as it is*, which is the better state of society, the rural or the city — which class are the best educated, and which do the most for the improvement of the world.

It will be found that cities have always been the leaders in almost every thing that has been done for the amelioration and improvement of the condition of man. The tendency of the pastoral life is to give prominence to the past. There is something in the quiet of the country that naturally dis-

poses the mind to dwell upon the past, and make it strongly contemplative. They muse over the graves of their ancestors, over the scenes of their childhood, and are deeply alive to old associations, old customs, old modes of living and acting. Not so with the denizens of cities. There, every thing tends to the future. What of to-morrow ? what of to-morrow ? The events of the day are buried with the day that gave them birth. The tendency of every thing there is progressive, onward, still onward ! The population of cities live in the future ; are constantly planning improvements, supplanting old institutions and old usages, and penetrating into new and untried fields. There, social enjoyments are carried to the greatest height ; and it will be found that those who have exerted the greatest influence in the world have usually spent some portion of their time, daily, in innocent and improving social and intellectual amusements. In fact, the great central seats of intellectual and social enjoyments in our cities, towns, and villages, are always great centres of influence. It is there that the statesman, the divine, the man of science, the poet, the sculp-

tor, and the artist, are welcomed, protected, encouraged, and fostered. It is there, sooner than elsewhere, that the intellectual nature of man is appreciated and cultivated ; it is there, more than elsewhere, that woman is elevated to her true sphere, as the equal and companion of man ; it is there that taste, and learning, and genius, and merit, are rewarded ; it is there that new worlds are discovered, new mines of thought are opened, new plans of social, civil, intellectual, and religious improvement are started, discussed, and sent forth to the world. If a literary institution is to be founded, if a new enterprise of benevolence or improvement is to be started, there the idea is usually first conceived, there it is first discussed, there the institution is founded, and there the enterprise is fostered. If a great moral, civil, or religious revolution takes place, it generally finds its origin and its chief supporters there. London society has for centuries given law to England, as has that of Paris to France. It was through the influence of the former, aided by sister cities, that those great reforms in the political condition of Englishmen have been effected, limiting the prerogative

of the king, reforming the odious rotten borough system, extending free trade, and levelling to the ground the inhuman corn-law monopoly ; while to Parisian influence, almost solely, are the French people indebted for almost every political privilege that has been won for them from the grasp of the throne and the hierarchy. What is true of those two capitals is more or less true of most of the great cities in the world. While they cover, undoubtedly, a great amount of vice and crime, they are, at the same time, continually progressive, and take the lead in all those great enterprises that have for their object the good of our race. The evil that they generate is mostly temporary, while every acquisition that they make in the cause of truth is eternal. They may countenance, and even license, vice for a time ; but better counsels will, in time, prevail ; while one great truth there evolved, like that of the right of private judgment, or universal education, or civil freedom, and once grasped by the public mind, though afterwards “crushed to earth,” lives to “rise again.” The reason why cities lead in all improvements is manifest. It is because the best classes in cities

— those that actually give character to them — obey the laws of nature more nearly than any other class of persons. They partake more freely of the natural bounties of Providence, and bestow usually some part of each day's time upon some useful employment ; some upon the improvement of their minds in the way of intellectual, and some in the improvement of their hearts, in the way of social amusements, and, if they are wise, some in educating their religious natures in the way of devotion. All their faculties are cared for, physical, social, intellectual, and religious. It is because they thus divide their time between all of their faculties, and thus do something, every day, in the way of strengthening them, that they attain to such superiority over others in personal appearance, in intellectual cultivation, in social improvements and enjoyments, and in all the graces that lend a charm to civilized life. It is this cultivation of *all* their faculties, instead of one, or a part of them, that makes them what they are, and gives them that energy, power, and influence, that does so much in ameliorating the condition of the world. The men who really exercise the

greatest influence on the destinies of the world are generally the most in society, and the most free and social, and the easiest to be amused. It is there that they acquired the knowledge that gives them their influence. The capital error has been to shut men up six days in the week, and let them out on the seventh, to teach us how to live in a world which practically they know nothing about. Practice is necessary even to make a good theory.

The amusements of the most influential classes, in all great cities, are almost as regular and as well defined as the business of the most orderly merchant. Their amusements never crowd upon their business, nor their business upon their amusements. Such an hour is devoted to a walk or a drive; such an hour to the opera, theatre, concert, or public entertainment of some kind; such an hour to social amusements around their own hearths, or that of their friends; such an hour to their studies; and such to their closet. All are occupied, all are improved, and their minds are kept full and their hearts are kept warm. A few hundred thousand of minds, thus trained, rule Great Britain; a few

hundred thousand such rule France, and knock kings about, sometimes, like shuttle-cocks ; a few such circles, composed of minds thus trained, rule a great many towns, cities, states, and even nations, that I wot of, with a power none the less potent and sure, because, like the heat of an obscured sun, the cause is all unseen.

The power acquired by those circles that have a plan about their amusements, and by the members of them individually, by which they serve themselves and the world, is not the only great commendable feature in it. It has quite as happy an influence on them in all the other relations of life. I think a candid inquirer would soon discover that such a division of time, and such means of improvement, always show themselves more or less in the life of those who employ them ; that they tend to make better parents and better children ; that they tend to make happier homes, diffuse more love, more taste, more refinement, more sensibility, to the real felicities of life, of which there are undeniably many ; and that they give a charm to the family circle that it gets in no other way ; in a word, that amusements, when rightly

conducted, tend to improve the morals; and that those who are the most methodical in the enjoyment of them are truly the most moral classes in the community. If any are inclined to doubt that proposition, I question much whether it is done after mature consideration. The fallacy is this — that the blemishes on those in the higher circles are seen and noted by all the classes below them, while corresponding ones on members of a lower circle are only noticed by those who are in that circle or below it. All classes have their errors; but it would be unnatural, indeed, if the more polished and refined classes were not what the terms made use of to designate them imply, and less prone to vice than those whose advantages to know and appreciate the beautiful and true in our natures had been unequal to their own.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTINUES THE HISTORICAL TESTIMONY RELATING TO AMUSEMENTS AS SEEN IN JEWISH HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS, GRECIAN GAMES, ROMAN AMUSEMENTS, AND THE CHIVALRIC AMUSEMENTS OF THE KNIGHTS OF PROVENCE.

BUT the most striking and convincing historical testimony, in favor of holidays and amusements, is yet to come. It is drawn, in my apprehension, from facts that cannot deceive. They are facts that admit of no historic doubt. Our conclusions will be no far-fetched and labored ones, that hang doubtfully upon the subject. They will spring as naturally from the facts as light from flame. In what I have already said, under this head, I have had to draw my testimony in favor of amusements from the influence exerted by organizations of a *quasi* social and diversional character, like those of the family, the church, the government, and of fashionable circles, most of which are established more

for other ends than for those of amusement. But I come now to those that were established expressly for recreation and amusement, (except, perhaps, some of the festivals of the Jews,) and the influence of which is as clearly to be traced as that of the mariner's compass or the steam-engine. I allude to the holidays and festivals of the Jews, the Olympic games of the Greeks, the musical and theatrical amusements of the Romans, and their gladiatorial exhibitions, and the chivalric amusements of the knights of Provence.

The amusements of the ancient Jews first demand our attention, both in regard to the order of time, and for their important bearing on the subject under consideration. They had more holidays than any other people ever had, ancient or modern ; and they kept them more strictly. Every fiftieth year was a year of jubilee, when every debt was forgiven, every bondman was made free, and every possession reverted to its original possessor ; when for them to rejoice and be merry was as natural as it would have been unnatural for them to have done the same on some other occasions, when suffering rebuke

for their offences. Every seventh year was one long holiday for recreation and amusement ; while, in each year, there were numerous feasts and festivals, apparently expressly designed to bring the people together, sometimes in families, sometimes in tribes, and sometimes the whole nation. Their festivals of the wheat harvest, and of ingathering at the year's end, seem clearly to have been designed to assemble families together, and cement them in closer bonds of union ; the feast of tabernacles and some others seem to have been designed to accomplish the same object among them as tribes, while the feast of the passover, which carried all the males up to Jerusalem, seems to have been designed to accomplish the same object among them as a nation ; and certainly, if that was the object, most thoroughly was it accomplished ; for no one who reads either their ancient or modern history, can fail to be profoundly impressed with their oneness, as a people, in every thing that belongs to them as members of families, or of tribes, or of the great Jewish nation. If God, in making them his "peculiar" people, made use of these holidays and festivals, as

his instruments to effect it, it must be allowed that they accomplished all that they seemed designed to do.

Let us look for a moment at that wonderful arrangement of the Jewish religious polity that required all the males to go up to Jerusalem at stated periods to worship. By that means the male portion of the whole Jewish nation were, from time to time, brought together. They had thus an opportunity, at stated periods, to see each other, and confer together, and they there worshipped together the same God, in the same temple, and at the same time. During these seasons, every house in Jerusalem was open to the stranger, that he might appropriate, at his pleasure, any unoccupied room in which to enjoy the festive occasion. The effect of these feasts, thus celebrated, was to give the whole Jewish people a strong love for the temple, and for Jerusalem, and to create a social attachment among them of no ordinary character. Jerusalem was the sun of their social system, and their festivals were doubly dear to them as the honored instruments of bringing them into such close social relations; and from year to year the

Jewish nation became, by those means, more and more *one people*, professing *one religion*, and worshipping *one God*. And so thoroughly did their peculiar holiday and festival institutions imbue them with the principles of social union and oneness of faith, that centuries of exile and persecution have not been able to overcome their attachment to all those principles, thus begotten and fostered.

Their less religious and more familiar amusements of the feast of tabernacles, and other seasons of rejoicing, were eminently social, directly calculated to maintain strong social feelings among the same household, and the constancy of the attachments of the Jews to each other, through every suffering, has given the strongest test of the wonderful influence of their social system. Their amusements were of a social and religious character, and the influence of them is seen in the social and religious character of the people; whence it is to be inferred that amusements, holidays, and festivals *may be* made even subservient to religion.

Among the amusements that have prevailed in different ages of the world, the Olympic games of ancient Greece stand first

for unrivalled celebrity. Those were, at first, simply trials of skill in music, composition, and rhetoric. Soon, however, they united with them gymnastic exercises, and the swiftest of foot, and the ablest horsemen and charioteers, became competitors in the games. The celebrity of these games extended, not only throughout Greece, but the world. They were held every fourth year, and their coming was the signal for travellers from all parts of Greece, and even from distant portions of Europe and Asia, to repair to Olympia, a town in Greece, where those games were celebrated, to witness them. The interim between these games was spent by the candidates for Olympic honors in preparing for the trial. Years and years were spent in training for the exhibition. The best blood of Greece entered the lists as competitors for the Olympic crown. The honor of the victor was so great, that it extended from him to his family, and even to his country, and he received his crown amid the most tumultuous rejoicing.

Can any one doubt but that these games had a vast and controlling influence in elevating the Greeks to their high state of

cultivation? When has the world ever known such high incentives to strive after skill and excellence in poetry, music, rhetoric, and in physical prowess, held out to the youth of any country, as were thus presented by the honors of the Olympiad? And how clearly we can trace their influence! Is it wonderful that a Grecian army bore down all opposition when her soldiers had such training? or, is it strange that Grecian artists have achieved such wonders in tracing the human form, with men for models trained, under the Olympic influence, to such perfection of physical development? If modern sculptors cannot rival those of ancient Greece, the cause is apparent. They have no such models.

To the same cause is to be traced their unrivalled proficiency in music, poetry, and oratory. The Olympic crown was an honor that few could *win*, but for which all could *strive*; and hence while but few, comparatively, were enabled to reach the goal, and win the prize, yet all were carried forward, either by actual competition, or by the unseen, unfelt, but ever-active influence of emulation. The Olympic crown was con-

stantly before the people, encouraging the aged to consecrate their sons to study, and animating the young to unwearied exertion ; and thus a current was created, bearing each generation farther on in the scale of improvement.

Here amusements were made subservient to the highest and most ennobling objects of civilization and improvement, and most triumphantly was the utility demonstrated.

In Roman history, we are taught, not only that amusements may be instrumental in conducting a people to a high state of civilization, but may also assist in debasing them. The principal place of amusement in ancient Rome was THE FORUM, an immense square near the centre of the city, which had been early set apart by Romulus as a place of amusement, as well as for the general assemblies of the people on occasions of public interest. It was, at a later period, surrounded with porticoes to protect the people against the weather ; and under them, before theatres were erected, plays were represented, for the amusement of the populace. At a still later period, it was surrounded with beautiful palaces and costly public

edifices, and adorned with an immense number of the most celebrated of Grecian statues. There, in the early ages of the republic, the people resorted for amusement and instruction, and for business of a public nature. There they were delighted with musical and scenic representations; and there they were moved and taught from the lips of their most gifted orators, statesmen, and jurists. Rome at that time contained sixteen other forums of lesser magnitude, dedicated in a greater or less degree to the same routine of instruction and amusement.

While the amusements of the Romans continued to be of this intellectual and social character, they advanced in the scale of civilization, until Rome claimed the proud eminence of being the mistress of the world. Her orators, statesmen, historians, poets, and artists, stood then as unrivalled as her conquering armies. In an evil hour, her officers, who were prosecuting her wars in Africa, enriched the menageries of the metropolis with great numbers of the ferocious beasts of that tropical climate. Then the people were diverted from their other amusements to witness the horrid spectacle of the gladia-

torial arena. The first exhibitions were merely tolerated on occasions of great national rejoicing, and then none but the meanest criminals were condemned to enter the arena with those fierce wild beasts, to contend for their lives for the amusement of the people. It was at a time when the successes of foreign conquest and butchery had made no little progress in corrupting the people and their rulers, and when all means were resorted to by the latter to secure the favor of the former. It soon became a part of the policy of the military leaders of the armies in the provinces to bring home, with their other spoils, large numbers of lions and tigers, with which to feed this growing and morbid appetite of the people, and thus cheaply secure an enthusiastic reception. At length, so unfeeling and inhuman did these shows render the people, that, from criminals, they began to sentence prisoners of war, and at last their slaves, to those terrible contests; and, as every depth has a lower deep, soon the people themselves began to enter the arena as volunteers, first to contend with those wild beasts, and at length with each other in mortal combat for the

amusement of the populace. And Roman mothers, at last, urged their children to engage in those combats, and decreed them funeral honors.

The Coliseum, one of the most magnificent edifices ever erected, said to be capable of containing eighty thousand people, was appropriated to these barbarous exhibitions. When the amusements of the people were diverted to the gladiatorial arena, their glory began to depart. They lost their relish for the more intellectual, social, and refined amusements of former days, and gradually partook of the ferocious character of those infamous exhibitions. Assassinations, riots, and anarchy, became the order of the day, and their rulers, who had fostered this spirit in the people, were, by one of those just and inevitable laws of Heaven, the first to feel its terrible consequences. For a long time after, almost every one of them fell by the hand of violence.

In this brief history of the Romans, we see clearly that there is a vast distinction between different kinds of amusements, and that, while some may be instrumental in conducting a nation to greatness and excellence,

others may be equally efficacious in sinking them to barbarism. The great truth, that stands out in bold relief, in the history of every people, is, that they will have amusements of some kind ; and it depends on those who lead in society to say whether those amusements shall be improving or debasing. But this view of the case will be more fully considered hereafter.

A very striking illustration of the influence of amusements is to be found in the history of the southern portion of France. In the course of the tenth century, there arose, in that portion of France then denominated *Provence*, a class of minstrels called *troubadours*, who composed and sang their own verses, and travelled from village to village, from city to city, and from court to court, chanting their wild and romantic melodies, and awakening in the people, wherever they went, a taste for poetry and song. So popular did this class of minstrels become, that the arrival of some of their number at the courts of the feudal lords was greeted with special honor, and many of the most renowned knights of Provence assumed the garb and staff of the troubadour, and went

from court to court celebrating the praises of their favorite hero or mistress. Thus dawned the age of chivalry. All classes became more and more awakened to the enchantments of the poet's and minstrel's art, and were acquiring, day by day, a knowledge of, and a taste for, those courtesies of life so often the theme of the troubadour's panegyric. The barons, then sovereigns in their own territories, invited the neighboring knights to their castles to contend in poetry and song, and at length to the more hardy and knightly encounter of the tilt and tournament, in the presence of multitudes of vassals and retainers, and amid the assembled beauty of the court.

The troubadours, who were at first a very humble class of minstrels, led the way, by the peculiar character of their productions, in the elevation of woman in the scale of being. This they did, perhaps, quite unintentionally, by celebrating, in their songs, the beauty and charms of some particular lady of the court where they were entertained ; and, as it was found not only pleasing but profitable to the minstrel, woman soon became the chosen theme of their panegyric. From being de-

pressed, she was idolized. In the progress of time, under the mild and peaceful sway of woman's influence, the south of France, the home of the troubadours, began to exhibit rapid progression in all the arts of civilized life. While all of the rest of Europe was constantly in arms, those portions where the minstrels' art and influence had penetrated, enjoyed comparative peace; and, instead of cultivating the art of war, they passed their time in cultivating the graces, and enjoying the delights of social life. While the northern part of France, while England and the northern part of Germany, were just emerging from a state of semi-barbarism, the inhabitants of Provence were making great strides in social and intellectual improvement. Music, dancing, and the sports of the tilt, and all the graces and arts of social life, were carried by them to the highest perfection. They continued in this peaceful, happy, and progressive state until about the middle of the thirteenth century, during which time the fame of the chivalric knights of Provence had penetrated to all of the courts of Europe, and the emperor Frederic Barbarossa, of Germany, and Richard Cœur de Lion, of

England, invited them to their courts to receive instruction from them in the usages and ceremonies of that knightly accomplishment. The greater consideration in which women were held in Provence had begun to be felt in the courts of the more northern princes and barons, and was beginning to exert its peaceful influence.

Thus was it in Southern France, about the middle of the thirteenth century ; and if we could do no more than show that the amusement of the song, the dance, the minstrel, and the tournament, had been instrumental in elevating woman, diffusing the arts of peace, silencing the clamors of war, and carrying the people forward in the march of improvement, far in advance of their neighbors, it would surely be enough to convince any one of the importance of amusements, especially of those which are social. But that is not all. A more striking fact is yet to be learned from the history of Provence, showing how intimately social amusements are connected with religious improvement, as well as civil.

It was in the very heart of Provence, the land of the minstrel, the dance, and of chiv-

alry, and while these amusements were still enjoyed by all classes, that the Albigenses, the most noble and heroic band of Christians that the world ever saw, arose to dispute the dominion of the Roman hierarchy, and to endeavor to restore Christianity to its original simplicity. The first light that illumined the thick religious darkness of the middle ages sprang up under the fostering care of the ancient family of the counts of Toulouse, themselves the greatest patrons of the amusements of that chivalric age. The terrible persecutions that the Romish church instituted against the first Christians of a reformed age, were carried on with a bloody vengeance, that might well have emanated from the cloister, but never from man educated as nature designed he should be. During these persecutions, the gallant family of the house of Toulouse were exterminated, and their immense possessions confiscated to the church of Rome ; and the happy fields of Provence, so late the theatre of such rapid social advancement, were laid waste, and whole cities put to the sword.

Fugitive Albigenses escaped to the mountains of Piedmont, and into some parts of

Lombardy, where they formed what has since been called the *French church*, which was continued through the Waldenses, to the times of the Hussites and the reformation. But the Romish church carried into Provence her unnatural hatred of amusements, and with that war ceased the song of the troubadours, and all Christian and social progress. That persecuting and unprogressive church, however, could not efface the records of the past, imprinted, as they were, by the social, intellectual, and hardy amusements of nearly three centuries, on the character and institutions of the people of that delightful country ; and it still continues, to this day, to be celebrated as the land of poetry and song, and for beautiful and simple exhibitions of social enjoyment. In the age of chivalry, all the courtesies of life were there carried to the highest perfection, even to the establishment of courts for the trial of offences against good breeding and love ; and there, too, may still be found a people evincing a greater degree of native taste and grace than in any other quarter of the world.

In that same land of minstrelsy, song, and chivalry, the new principles of religious faith

announced by Luther found a ready response, and made their strongest rally for the regeneration of France. This was the native land of the Huguenots, a band of Christians whose heroic attachment to the reformed faith was only equalled by that of their brethren of the thirteenth century.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPOSES THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF DISUSING AMUSEMENTS AND OF LEADING AN AUSTERE LIFE.

HAVING considered the effect of *using*, we now come to the consideration of the effect of *disusing* amusements. Here we rely upon a class of testimony that seems to be conclusive in favor of the former. All our faculties, both mental and bodily, require daily use, daily *exercise*. Amusements constitute an essential ingredient in the sum of that daily exercise. They are to our *exercise* what the stimulating properties in our food are to that—essential to its healthy action and right digestion ; and the enthusiast in religion, who rejects the former, is as far out of the way as the enthusiast in temperance would be should he persist in extracting the alcoholic properties of the latter before using it. They, in so doing, would err on the one side, while the devotee of pleasure and the inebriate err on the other ; since each party, in

that case, refuses to take his food and his exercise in the proportions that nature ordered; but one class takes the solids and rejects the stimulants, and the other takes the stimulants and rejects the solids. The only difference between them is, that the inebriate and the devotee of pleasure take into their systems, in one day, stimulants that belong with the food and exercise of a month, perhaps, while the enthusiasts in religion or in temperance can only reject the stimulants that belong to each day as it occurs. Hence the latter get less immediate injury from violating the laws of nature than the former, because they at no one time violate them to so great an extent; but it is not speed, but perseverance, that accomplishes the most, either for good or for evil. The former, who take nothing but the stimulants, violate the laws of nature so intensely that the abuse shows itself, at once, throughout the whole system, intoxicating and deranging its every function, and, like the hoar-frost on the tender blossoms of the young fruit-tree, disappoints *present* hopes of increase. Not so the effect of *rejecting* these stimulants, by the latter. They may do it, and apparently

suffer no injury from it, until years of general decline has carried them so much farther and farther from their original landmark, that the distance becomes perceptible to the most careless observer. They are like that young fruit-tree, planted in a cold and barren soil, that bears up nobly against the natural lack of warmth and moisture at its root, and buds, and blossoms, and bears fruit, year by year, but less and less abundantly, and of a quality less and less grateful to the taste, until at last it dies for lack of nourishment, and rewards no longer the toils of the husbandman.

The tendency of the disuse of pleasures and amusements, and the effect of austerity on the mind and heart, can best be illustrated by beginning with those outer systems that have pushed the doctrine to its utmost limit, and, tracing the modifications of those cold systems down into the more genial latitude now enjoyed by us. In so doing, we shall find that every step in the progress discloses richer, and rarer, and more abundant products clustering around us, till we reach that meridian line, where man is neither scorched by the sunshine of pleasures, nor chilled by

their eclipse, but where they lend their own true light to warm and nourish the waste places of life, and make it bud and blossom, and yield its richest fruits. The Hindoo or Brahmin system may be considered as richly entitled to the proud preëminence of occupying that outer region, that extreme north, or Nova Zembla of the religious world, both in respect to its claim of ancient origin, for its austere doctrines, and for its bitter fruits. Self-denial, penances, vows, and mortifications of the flesh, are the very soul of that system. The extent to which they are carried by that people is almost incredible. The way, for hundreds of miles around some of their temples, is strewed with the bones of pilgrims, who have perished, some in attempting to walk there, some in attempting to creep there, and others in carrying out a thousand other strange methods of tormenting themselves on the journey. It would be revolting to attempt to give any thing like a just view of their principles and practices in those respects. The effect of that system on those people is too well known to need repetition. They are the wonder of the world in that respect.

For ignorance, brutality, vice, crime, cruelty, bigotry, persecution, and superstition, they stand unrivalled in history. Popery, in its lowest and most subterranean gropings, bathes in ether in comparison with it.

Tracing the history of religious systems from the Hindoo to the Grecian, we find a gradual modification of the ascetic principle, until it is entirely lost in the latter. The religious systems of the Buddhists, the Druids, the Scandinavians, the Goths, the Huns, and the Egyptians, were all more or less ascetic in their character; but that feature appeared far more intensely in some of them than in others. The Buddhist religion, in the northerly part of Hindoostan and in part of China, and the Druid system among the Celts in the north of Europe, resembled, in many of their features, the Hindoo system. They were, however, less intensely austere than that system, though but slight mitigations of it; and we see a corresponding improvement in the character of those people over the Hindoos, but leaving them ignorant, wild, fierce, and superstitious. That feature appears still less prominent as we descend through the Scandinavian sys-

tem, and that of the Goths and Huns, to the Egyptians ; and in proportion as that is mitigated, the people are seen to rise in the scale of being. Traces of civilization are discovered among the Scandinavians in their poets, in the Goths in their architecture and taste for the arts generally, and in the Egyptians in their great attainments in the sciences and arts generally.

The Grecian system was more free from objection on the ground of asceticism, though objectionable enough on others, than any other religious system, ancient or modern, after that of the Jews, and that of Christ and his apostles. In that respect — as to pleasures — the Grecian system was modelled on the same *principles* of the Bible, though not on its *precepts* ; for of those they were ignorant. Under that system Greece became the most cultivated and refined nation that has ever existed. Athens was then the glory of the Grecian republic, and she had public gymnasiums of immense extent, where her people not only enjoyed bodily recreation and exercise daily, but mental also ; for there her most distinguished philosophers, rhetoricians, and teachers of other branches of knowledge

delivered their lectures and exercised their pupils. Those gymnasiums were their common schools, educating mind and body, and training the people, year by year, to enter the lists, and contend for the highest honors in the highest institution of learning, viz., their Olympic games. There never have existed any people who provided so systematically for daily recreation and amusement as did the Grecians at the period of their highest cultivation.

The brutalizing tendencies of the austere system is most strikingly illustrated in the history of a certain sect of philosophers, as they called themselves, who arose in Athens, when her fame was the greatest. They were composed of the best of men, and had one of the best of objects in view, viz., the cultivation and practice of a more pure morality ; and with that end in view they adopted, unfortunately, the austere principle, and denied themselves the then usual enjoyments. The history of that sect is too well known to need repetition. They sunk, by the inevitable tendencies of that mistaken precept, from one height of cultivation and refinement to another and lower, until, at

last, they became, though surrounded with the refinements of the Grecian capital, so ignorant, rude, indecent, and brutal, that they were objects of contempt, and the very name of their sect, that of *Cynic*, became a term of reproach.

The history of the decline of that great nation is full of instruction on the point in question. They were conquered by the Romans, about a century before the Christian era, while yet a polished and refined people ; and the less natural religious and social systems of the latter, in the respect that I have mentioned, were introduced among them. Subsequently, the Popish system of religion was extended over them, and with it the austere, ascetic principles of that system ; and under that their light soon went out, and they were involved in that general decline that distinguished all Christendom during that reign and golden age of asceticism — the dark ages. They have ever since that time been under that system, not essentially mitigated in the Greek church. The light of the reformation, that broke the enchantment of that deep and brooding sleep, was

not even reflected on them ; so that, as to them, the dark ages still continue.

The Roman mythology was but little removed from the Grecian, in its principles in regard to pleasures, and under it the Roman commonwealth rose to great proficiency in the arts and sciences, and every thing that illustrates and adorns human nature ; but the excess to which they carried the pursuit of pleasures, and the barbarous nature of some of their amusements, had a tendency, not only to keep them behind their Grecian neighbors in cultivation and refinement, but to brutalize them. What their barbarous amusements lacked in that respect, however, the Romish church, with her self-denying doctrines, penances, vows, and mortifications, abundantly made up ; and that ancient seat of learning and the arts, although it has never ceased to be the capital of the religious world, and by that means calculated to be the centre of cultivation, has declined in every essential feature that distinguished her of old, so that she is now, in comparison with other cities, a mere mumbling, beadle-telling, knowledge-suppressing dotard, and is in every sense the fit capital of asceticism,

but in no sense worthy to be the metropolis of the Christian world, with its present upward tendencies.

We are now brought to the consideration of the Popish system of religion, which, after all, is the best illustration of our subject. The history of that church, and of the principles that have been by her inculcated, and of the countries that have borne allegiance to her, illustrates the tendencies of the ascetic principle so clearly, that no one, who is not blind, need err. If we look at it only in its broad aspect, we see the commencement of the monastic system immediately followed by the commencement of the dark ages; we see those dark ages characterized by ignorance, superstition, idolatry, vice, and crime, to an unparalleled extent; we see that the only light that beamed upon the thick darkness of that period came from Provence, the seat of poetry and song, the tilt, the tournament, the dance, and social amusements of all kinds; and that Europe was only awakened from her lethargic sleep by the voice of Luther, denouncing, to a certain extent, those unnatural principles that had so long enchain'd her. If we look farther, and com-

pare those countries which have practically discarded the ascetic principle, by suppressing monasteries and nunneries, either in whole or in part, that great law of human culture and refinement, for which I am contending, will still be found true to itself. England, France, Sweden, and Prussia, have the most effectually done that work, and it needs no one to remind even the schoolboy that, in proportion as they have effectually done it, they stand foremost in civilization and improvement. Austria has done it to a limited extent. Spain, Portugal, the Neapolitan and Sardinian monarchies, and the Italian states, still adhere to the old maxims, usages, and monastic institutions that were in vogue at the reformation ; and in all of this time, they have not made as much progress towards that high level of civilization, refinement, and pure Christian knowledge, that has been reached in those first-mentioned countries, as would be made by a respectable tribe of North American Indians in six weeks under good missionary teaching. The same is true of the South American states and Mexico, where asceticism is in full tide of successful experiment, carrying

the people from one stage of ignorance and anarchy to another, till their less ascetic neighbors shall swallow them up in their vast and ever-widening empire.

The tendency of the austere, anti-pleasure principle is the most apparent, and the most fatal, in its withering influence on the tender sensibilities of the heart, converting truly what is born flesh into the most flinty stone. In truth, *there* lies the secret of its baneful influence. The sternest persecutors in the world have always been the sternest ascetics. Others, in some instances, may have persecuted as effectually, but it was as warriors going forth to conquer, or as madmen wreaking their vengeance ; but by the former alone has it been pursued as the natural food of a hungry, bloodthirsty soul. The Brahmins, I have said, are the most austere in their discipline ; and among no people, not even the Romans, in their palmiest days, did excommunication mean so much as it does with them. An excommunicated Hindoo is the most man-forsaken being that we are made acquainted with in the history of our race. It will be found that the signification of the word among all the sects in the world

corresponds in severity to the austerity of their tenets. In the Romish church, in her most ascetic age, it meant every thing that was awful in human imprecation ; but, as the monastic spirit has become mitigated even at Rome, excommunication has been mitigated with it, till now it means one thing in France, and another thing in Austria or Italy, and still another in Spain or South America. In the Protestant churches it means little or much, just in the proportion that pleasures are enjoyed or scorned.

Without attempting to sketch, what every child knows so well, the cold, stern, bigoted and cruel character of the Romish monks and ascetics of the middle ages, I will content myself with referring to one or two facts, illustrating, in the strongest and clearest light, the intimate connection there necessarily is between extreme austerity of life and extreme sternness and cruelty of disposition.

For all the ordinary purposes of the Romish church, the usual discipline of the monastic orders made them the sufficiently pliant, subtle, and hardened tools of her arbitrary power. But an era came in the history of the church when they were thought

to be hardly equal to the emergency. It was when the Waldenses first made their appearance, and the first light of the reformation was painted dimly on the upper sky, betokening coming day. The first glimmer of that light was seen by the Romish church, and she hastened to prepare a fit army to crush that valiant band of Christians, who were so rapidly gaining light themselves, and diffusing it throughout Europe. To that end the order of Dominican or mendicant friars was instituted by the pope, whose members were not only subjected to the most stringent discipline of the then monastic orders, but were condemned to perpetual poverty and mendicity. In due time they fully justified the far-sighted policy of their master. Among all the hounds of persecution, they fawned the most successfully at Rome, scented the prey the farthest, and followed it with the greatest diligence. All of that duty at length was intrusted to their faithful hands, and it was they that overrun the fair fields of Provence, led in the butchery of the Waldenses and Albigenses, and lighted and fed the fires of the Inquisition. The sternness of their natures appears far less in the taking

of the lives of the heretics than it does in the tortures that they subjected them to. That is the best test of the extent of the hardening process that they had undergone.

They were called upon, however, soon after they were established, to share the honors and emoluments of persecution with the Franciscan order, which was founded, soon after theirs was, on the same mendicant and extreme austere system, and which was the only order that could think of vying with them at all ; and between the two the Romish church was governed until the reformation commenced, under Luther. To check that reformation, it was seen, would require a still more bigoted, subtle, and cruel race than even the Dominican system had yet furnished ; and hence was founded the order of Jesuits, who, under Loyola, contrived to improve on even Dominican austerity ; and hence, in due time, they brought forth a more artificial, and truly wonderful race of monsters, than had ever before graced the Romish church. They proved to be a little too hideous even for Romish eyes, and hence were banished from most of the kingdoms of Europe, and at one time drove even their

mother church to the unnatural act of disowning them ; but, as that latter was only because they were so weak as to unmask themselves, and discover their deformity, it ought not, perhaps, in justice, to be brought up against them.

But to make the point still clearer, — that even a slight error in this matter produces great deformity of character, and great social evils, — I propose to draw one parallel nearer to the point which we ourselves occupy. I draw my first illustration from the history of the English Puritans, who arose in the sixteenth century, and who did so much, in the contest with Charles I., in curbing the overbearing power of the throne. By their firmness and valor, that great revolution was effected ; odious prerogatives were abolished, and all England rejoiced ; but in a very few years the English nation, almost as unanimously, welcomed Charles II. to the throne ; and, in so doing, they freely surrendered to him almost all the privileges they had won on so many fields of battle and at so much cost. Why was this ? The English are not a fickle nation. It was because the Puritans of that period had adopted the self-denying,

cynical doctrine. They denounced all amusements, shut up all the theatres, repudiated all the old English holidays, Christmas, May-day, harvest-home, and all their rural sports, and shed a gloomy influence on all around them. The people, after hundreds of years' experience of the evils of irresponsible kingly prerogative, and twenty years of cynical rule, decided with heart and soul in favor of the former, as the least of the two evils. We know what followed. A reaction took place. The people, by puritanical austerities, had been kept for years out of their place, like a bent bow, and when they were unloosed, they went as far the other way.

I draw my next illustration from the history of our own forefathers — the Puritans. In so doing, I am aware that I am venturing on "taboo" ground, and that it is just about as much as my life is worth to do it. I am aware that there is a disposition among many to canonize those strong-minded and stout-hearted Christians ; but those, I apprehend, are not the best friends of them, or of their descendants. Their title to our reverence and love does not depend on the *perfection* of

their Christian character, — for but few could rest on that, — but on their *firmness* in holding fast to the truth as they understood it. Their title to applause rests, not on the truth of their dogmas, but on the heroic courage with which they faced every danger and privation for the sake of carrying out principles that they *believed* to be right. They were Christian *heroes*, not saints. They came here as Puritans, lived and died so, without dishonoring their name, and have left their history for our instruction. Weak shall we be if we do not profit by its teachings. They came here with the hostility of their sect to pleasures and amusements. They neither brought with them any taste for light-hearted, social enjoyments, nor suffered others to introduce them among them ; so that, for the first hundred years, we may safely say that they did nothing to make themselves giddy and light-headed.

Though we see so much to approve in the history of our forefathers, I believe that candor will require every one to admit that there was, in the language of the day, “a screw loose somewhere.” Their history is not free from blemishes, and those blemishes were

just what I have been contending are the natural fruits of an austere and gloomy life. They did not have enough of the exhilaration of the pleasures of life to keep their hearts warm, their feelings gentle, and their minds free from the fogs and vapors of superstition and bigotry. This we see in their rough treatment of their neighbors, the Indians, and their fellow-Christians, the Anabaptists and Quakers, and in the tendency of their minds towards the superstitious and marvellous. We see in their history how wonderfully every degree of austerity in the life is imprinted, in corresponding colors, on the character. Our Puritan fathers only disused amusements; they did not, like friars, torment themselves; and hence were only rough, not brutal; they only protected themselves from prowling heretics, and hung them in the last resort, when they could not drive them away, as they did Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. If they had had a few borrowed torments in their education, those latter would have been followed and persecuted where they went. They only protected themselves from heretics and witches, and weeded them out as a man would weed his

garden ; but the ascetics, on the Continent, who had had a sterner education, hunted them, at that time, as a sportsman does the game. To be candid, reader, do you believe we should ever have had to record, and comment on, those errors of our fathers, if they had been a little more social, and had cultivated, a little more, innocent and healthy amusements ? Do you believe those Quakers and Anabaptists would have been quite so stubborn and provoking, if they had led a less gloomy life ? What think you ? Would a "jam" now and then, or a little dance on the green, or a few concerts, or a rude effort at a play, or any thing of that kind, have done them any harm, and looked worse in their history than some things we see there ? Do you not believe that a few such cheering, brightening influences would have done much to have healed the dissensions among them, softened the asperities of their tempers, and made them see each other in a less antagonist light ? Do not call those things frivolities that make men more kind, gentle, and forgiving, and that tend to make them more disposed to live together in peace and amity.

It is hardly necessary or useful for us to trace the tendency of this doctrine any farther. I have already, in a previous chapter, alluded to the effect of the anti-pleasure system on children; and I have already appealed to your own experience of its effects on those around you. The Protestant system of religion made a great stride when it broke away from the monastic institutions of the Romish church; its progress in that direction was checked a little by the Puritans, but not permanently, and every day we see wearing away those ancient prejudices that stand so much in the way of that great sect (who hold, in so great a degree, the destinies of the world in their hands) occupying their true position. The day cannot be far distant when they will do it.

CHAPTER VIII.

**TREATS OF THE AMUSEMENTS OF ENGLAND,
FRANCE, AND GERMANY, AND THE TENDEN-
CIES OF THEM, AS SEEN IN THE DIFFER-
ENT MANNERS, TASTES, HABITS, AND DIS-
POSITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF THOSE SEV-
ERAL NATIONS.**

ANOTHER great test of the importance of amusements, as a means of improvement and of happiness, is to be found in the condition of different nations, whose amusements and whose social habits are known. Mere abstract reasoning, as to the effect of this and that mode of life, I avoid as far as I can, because I am aware that it never can, and never ought to carry the same conviction to our minds that facts do when properly presented. The former may do very well for a frame to build upon, but should never be mistaken for the building itself. I can never help looking upon mere theories and abstract speculations in much the same light that the painstaking mathematician did upon the

poem of his, more flighty friend, and say of them, as he said of that, "Pretty, very pretty; but what does it prove?"

It has been said by some one, "Give me the making of a people's songs, and I care not who makes their laws." This is considered a wise saying, and very justly; not, however, because it is true in its full extent, but because it expresses, in significant language, the transcendent influence that amusements exert upon us. The national songs of a people do exert an influence over them almost as potent as their laws, and sometimes more so. If we would learn the influence of this one class of amusements, we can see it illustrated in the history of almost every nation that has emerged from a state of barbarism to that of civilization. In almost every instance, music and the song lead the way. In the rhapsodists of the Greeks, the bards of the Celts, the skalds of the northern or Scandinavian tribes, the minstrels of Normandy and Britain, the troubadours of Provence, and the minnesingers of Germany, we see at once the precursors, and the most active and influential agents, in the work of the civilization of their respective tribes and

nations. Those rude minstrels and poets had more to do with giving the people of their several tribes a taste for literature, and the refinements of civilized life, than any one or all other causes put together ; and to the latter, the troubadours and minnesingers, is Northern Europe indebted, in a great degree, for the age of chivalry that distinguishes the history of the middle ages. The ranks of all these minstrels were often filled from among the most gallant knights and princes of their respective countries ; and some of them, the bards of the Celts and the skalds of the Scandinavians, exercised no little power in the management of the affairs of their several nations. The history of minstrelsy would be worth pursuing in illustration of the importance and elevating tendencies of amusements ; but it is somewhat foreign to the purposes of this chapter, and therefore I dismiss it, not, however, without the expression of a hope that the reader will do what I thus leave undone.

I cannot help here remarking, however, — and it is quite in the line of our present subject, — that, in almost every instance, the national character of a people is but the

reflection of their national amusements. We see reflected in the national oneness and strong religious faith of the Jews the influence of their national religious and secular feasts and holy days ; in the achievements of the Grecians in learning, in the arts, and in arms, the influence of their theatres, gymnasiums and Nemæan and Olympic games ; in the earlier Roman achievements in learning and eloquence, the influence of their forums, their orators and actors ; in the brutality of the later Roman character, in the days of the Cæsars, the influence of their bloody amusements of the gladiatorial arena ; in the sanguinary character of the Spaniards, the influence of their national spectacle of the bull fight ; in the gay but intellectual character of the French, the influence of the song, the dance, and the drama ; and in the hardihood and energy of the ancient English character, the influence of their rural sports and exercises.

To illustrate the important bearing that our amusements have upon us in moulding our characters, and to show the tendency of daily amusements to soften and polish the manners, create a refined taste, and make us

more temperate, contented, and happy, I propose to compare the condition of the English people with their neighbors across the Channel, in France and Germany, and see how far they differ in their estimate and use of amusements as a means of daily exercise and improvement, and how far they differ in their dispositions, habits, manners, tastes, and characters.

Perhaps, at first thought, one might be disposed to say that our characters are not formed in any essential degree by our amusements, but that the latter are the result and outward exhibition of our characters. But a moment's reflection will convince us that it is otherwise. Take, for instance, the generation that is now coming upon the stage. Those children were born to the present amusements of our people just as they were born to our constitutions of government. The one is as much waiting to mould their characters as the other. The preceding generation furnishes the amusements of the succeeding, just as they furnish their school books and religious teaching.

Our amusements are handed down to us. We are not left without them until reason

has taught us what to choose. In childhood we seize upon any amusement that presents itself. Nations change their laws and their religion, but seldom their amusements. New amusements may be introduced, but old ones are seldom forgotten. The degenerate Italian may now be found sitting on the ruined arches of the Coliseum, playing at the same game of *mora* which was played in the days of the Cæsars ; and the May-day and harvest-home of Christian countries are clearly of Jewish origin ; cards, dice, draughts, and chess are of so ancient an origin, that, like the common law, "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," nor history either. Centuries have wrought but little change in those, and hundreds of other amusements, and probably will work but little change in them for time to come.

In treating of the social condition of those nations, I by no means intend to speak of the few hundred thousand of privileged classes in each. It is with the people,—the mass of the people,—who live and die almost literally within the sound of their own vesper bells that we have now to do, and with the social influences that surround them.

The people of England enjoy far greater political rights than do those of either France or Germany. The English House of Commons emanates more immediately from the people than the French Chamber of Deputies, while but few of the German states pretend to any representative system of government. The people of England have wrung a great many political rights from their rulers that are yet denied or unthought of on the Continent ; and it would, therefore, other things being equal, be fair to presume that the English people are, in consequence, a happier people than their neighbors. But such, I apprehend, is not the fact.

The commoners of England, for a long period, have stood in an antagonist position to the nobility ; the House of Commons has steadily been encroaching upon the Peers ; and the unrepresented in the lower house have been constantly knocking at the doors of that house for admission. In the feudal days of Arthur, and the Richards, and some of the Henries, when the barons had nothing to fear from the peasantry, the English were a well-fed, jovial, happy people, feasting in the halls of their feudal lords, and accompanying

them as well in the chase as in the field. They were then masters in all athletic exercises. Their May-day, harvest-home, and Christmas festivities, were patterns of rustic simplicity and abundant cheer. But their continual encroachments on the privileges of the higher classes, as they gained better and better ideas of their rights, have, by degrees, wrought an entire change in the social condition of the people. For every political right that they have wrung from the nobles and gentry, the latter have cut off a social privilege, till now, hardly a vestige of the old holiday amusements exists. Time was when the nobility and gentry of England presided at the field sports and holiday festivals of the people, and, on Christmas mornings, feasted their neighbors and tenantry at their own halls. "The old hall doors of castles and manor houses were then thrown open, and resounded with the harp, and the carol, and their boards groaned with the weight of hospitality." The poets and writers of England have always dwelt with delight upon the numerous games and diversions of their holidays. Their Robin Hood, and Maid Marion, and their May queens, are immortal-

ized in song and story. But it is almost alone in song and story that they now live. The gentry of the country no longer feast their neighbors and tenantry on such occasions, as of old ; nor do they now preside at their festivities, or mingle with them in their sports. The cheerful festivities of the people, and their hardy field exercises, that were once encouraged, are now no longer promoted by the privileged classes. The roast beef and plum-pudding of old England, her May-day and other festivals, and her *sobriquet* of “merrie England,” have become matters of history and song to the great body of her people, rather than of actual experience.

No people in the world afford so happy an opportunity as those of Great Britain to test the effect of amusements. The time was when the people were governed almost solely by their feudal lords. Their wants were then but few, and their leisure hours were filled up with manly exercises and sports. It is worthy of observation to see how many rural sports the country people then enjoyed. There never has been a time when hunting, hawking, archery, wrestling, and all the

manly exercises of swimming, skating, rowing, casting weights, and playing ball were carried to such perfection as in those old feudal times. So, too, they excelled in their pastimes and domestic amusements, so that it is almost incredible to see the number and variety of them, from the gallant exercises of the tilt and tournament to the frolicsome plays of the children in the nursery. It is to be doubted whether any other country ever had so many hardy and social exercises and amusements combined as the English people did at one time in their history; and we know that that people grew up hearty, robust, and athletic, full of energy, and progressive in every thing; polite, chivalrous, and devout; and with a strong attachment to their country and their feudal lords, who not only promoted, but were the authors and the leaders in all those amusements.

But the government has been taken from the feudal barons, and concentrated entirely in the king and parliament; and it is now administered without the slightest reference to the amusements or recreation of the people. The government, so far from providing sources of amusement for the people, turns

the key on every thing that might afford innocent enjoyment to the poor ; and if by any chance they do indulge a little, it is considered downright poaching. The woods, fields, lakes, streams, and every thing that nature has lavished so bountifully for the gratification and enjoyment of man, are all sealed up against them by cruel and arbitrary game laws. No public libraries or halls are open to them. All the public buildings — Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the Tower, and every thing of that nature — are only accessible to those who can afford to pay admission fees. No systematic provision is made for public walks and promenades for them. To be sure, London has several parks ; but the people are scarcely indebted to the central government for them. They were laid out centuries ago, when amusements and recreations were provided by the higher classes ; and it was there, in the early days of London, that many of their games were played. It is related of Queen Anne, when she was wielding the triple sceptre of the three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland, that she very artlessly inquired of her prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, how much it would cost

her to shut up Hyde Park, and annex it to the palace. The wary minister, well knowing how that beautiful park was prized by the inhabitants of London, and the indignation with which the people would regard such an infringement upon their amusements, caustically replied, "Only three crowns, madam." In that, Queen Anne was only following out the general tendency of the British government towards every thing calculated for the recreation and enjoyment of the people. It is a remarkable feature in English economy, that no public place can be entered *without* a fee ; and there is no place so private, not excepting the royal bed-chamber, that may not be entered with a fee. What Lord Walpole said of the public men of England is equally true of every thing there — all have their price.

On the Continent, the people have never, for any length of time, occupied a position so antagonist to the privileged classes. Hence, although the line of demarkation between them is politically far greater, socially, it is far less, than that existing in England. The governments, on the Continent, seem to act designedly upon the principle that a happy

people will seldom scrutinize government very severely ; and hence they provide for the amusement of the people in a hundred ways equally useful to both classes and to the government. In the first place, almost all the public buildings, galleries of art, and halls of science, are open, either permanently or on stated days, to the whole people, free of charge. Scarcely any city, town, or hamlet, on the Continent, is without its park, prada, or village green, devoted to the public ; and throughout France, and in many parts of Germany, the theatres are assisted by the government, for the purpose of bringing that source of amusement within the means of the people. A large number of holidays are set apart for the people, and not unfrequently large sums are expended by the government in fireworks and other exhibitions to add to the *eclat* of those festivities.

The governments, on the Continent, distinctly recognize the desire in man for amusements, and indulge it to a certain degree, for the purpose of making him more quiet, contented, and happy, and less disposed to quarrel with his rulers. It seems, also, to be understood by the nobility and gentry of

the Continent, that the more they yield to the people socially, the less they shall have to yield politically. There seems to be an evident disposition to provide certain public places, where all classes may meet from time to time, and, at least, see each other, if nothing more. In England, the policy is to keep them asunder. There, apparently, every thing is arranged with that design. And there, as a matter of fact, now-a-days, the people and the nobility never do meet on any general level for amusement, or any thing else.

On the Continent, on the other hand, the higher classes and the people at large have, for so long a period, been in the habit of seeing each other in their parks, public gardens, and galleries of science and art, and at the theatre and opera-house, that nothing is thought of it. The former feel no repugnance at enjoying the same amusement with the latter, and the latter manifest none of that fear of the former, and cringing sycophancy, that the English poor betray, when, by accident, they meet their lordly masters. Every thing is easy and unconstrained on the one side and on the other. Both know their

places, and have no disposition to infringe upon the pleasures of the other.

The advantages, to both classes, that flow from their thus meeting, from time to time, on common ground, are observable in a thousand ways. Each class becomes acquainted with the persons of the other, with their manners and habits. Even this slight contact serves to dispel a vast amount of prejudice, from the mind of both classes, in relation to each other, just as foreign travel dispels national prejudices. They each see a great deal to admire in each other, even without any direct intercourse. The estimable qualities of head and heart always awaken the same sentiments of respect for the possessor, be he prince or beggar ; and there is no place where those qualities are shown more frequently than in the social circle, and on festive occasions. Hence, on the Continent, the people learn to esteem the privileged classes ; and the latter, although they may politically oppress those below them, seldom treat them with contempt. In England, there is no bond of union between the nobility and the people. Every thing like esteem for each other is out of the question ;

and no wonder, since they never get near enough together to know each other. It requires a certain degree of contact to inspire esteem, friendship, and love ; and the English system does not allow enough of that to even awaken the most distant sympathy for each other.

Another very obvious advantage that flows from having public places of amusement and recreation, where all classes, from time to time, meet, and, at least, see each other, is to be found in the opportunity it gives the poorer classes to improve their tastes and manners, by observing those above them, whose advantages have been greater. In England, where the people have, comparatively, no such opportunity, the working classes are rude and uncultivated, without taste or sentiment ; but it is otherwise on the Continent. There the poorer classes have an opportunity to see the higher classes at the public places of resort almost daily ; and they do not fail to profit by it. They insensibly, to a certain degree, catch the style of manners and address of their superiors. Hence, on the Continent, there is an ease, a grace, and a taste about the peasantry, and the poorer

classes generally, that is entirely unknown across the Channel, especially where they enjoy the advantages of which I have spoken. The very fact that they are surrounded, at those places, by their superiors, in itself is sufficient to put them upon studying after improvement in every thing that distinguishes them from the classes above them. It is a school to them in manners, and in taste in dress, from which they do not fail to derive improvement. This is spoken of as *native* grace of manner, *native* taste; whereas it is far more rational to trace it to their different social habits and advantages.

This taste, so observable where these social advantages are enjoyed, is not a little fostered and improved by the numerous galleries of art to which the people have such ready access. The constant association of the humbler classes with the beautiful conceptions of ancient and modern art, gives them a taste and relish for those graces of person, attire, and attitude, which they there see delineated in such perfection. In that point of view, the advantages of such places of resort for the people are almost inestimable.

Music is cultivated and encouraged on the Continent, particularly in Germany and Italy, as one of the chief sources of amusement, and with very great success. Wherever you go, there you are sure to hear it ; the streets, public squares, and promenades, of a summer's evening, are vocal with glees, catches, parts of operas, and ballads, from little family parties enjoying the evening air, or from laboring men returning from their work, or from students from the seminaries, or, perhaps, from street singers, in that way soliciting charity. Oftentimes the performances of street singers, and even little beggar girls, would not do discredit to many who make parade of their accomplishments among us.

These little accomplishments of life are there strown profusely through all the grades of society, elevating the middling classes, sweetening the toil of the laborer, cheering even the destitute, and tinging with cheerfulness even the sorrows of life. No one, I think, can mark the difference between those people and the English, in those respects, without tracing it to their social habits and institutions ; and without feeling that the poor, on the Continent, have the art to cull vastly

more enjoyment from a given state of circumstances than the corresponding classes across the Channel.

But the different effects of the social institutions on the Continent and in England are quite as observable in the dispositions and habits of the people, as in their manners and general accomplishments. The former are a far more temperate people than the latter. This may be partly owing, perhaps, to difference in climate; but it is quite as obvious that it is much more owing to their different social habits. The poor of England have no public places of resort for social amusements, or for recreation, that are free to them. If they are tempted, from any cause, to spend a few hours abroad, there is no place for them to resort to but the ale-house, or some other place of dissipation; while, under the same circumstances, on the Continent, the poor man would repair alone, or perhaps oftener with his whole family, to the park, or promenade, or to some gallery of art; or, if he chose, he could carry his family to a tea garden or *café*, there to listen to the music with which they are almost always enlivened, chat with his friends, and,

in return for those sources of amusement, purchase little refreshments for himself and family, if his means would allow of it. The companions of the former are only to be found at those haunts of dissipation, because no other place is free to them. Were there places of rational and respectable amusement, where they could go with their families, the ale-house and the gin-shop would soon be deserted. So, too, if the public places of resort for amusement, on the Continent, were once to be closed against the people, they, too, would soon fall into the same vices that so much impoverish and degrade the English. Both obey the laws of their nature, and resort to the best enjoyment within their reach.

Not the least important feature in the picture, however, is the effect that those different social institutions exercise upon the dispositions of the people of those different nations. After all, religious teaching, study, labor, amusements, every thing of that nature, are only means to an end, designed to make us devout, grateful, contented, and happy. That is the best system which best accomplishes those results. That there is

much in the systems of government, and of religion, in all of those countries, to defeat that great end, is past debating ; but, taking them as they are, it must be conceded that the people of England have a very surly way of enjoying even the little sunshine that does beam upon them, in comparison with the light-hearted and joyous manner with which every ray of such genial influence is seized upon and appropriated by those on the Continent. The latter would find a thousand little ways to extract enjoyment, under a given set of circumstances, that would overwhelm an English mind with gloom. To doubt that these different dispositions are more or less the result of their different social habits, would be to set aside all the rules generally deemed applicable to cause and effect.

In a word, it may be safely said that the people of France and Germany owe more to their village greens, and public promenades, parks, galleries of art, halls of science, and social institutions generally, as the means of their education, civilization, grace, taste, and accomplishments, and for their cheerful, temperate, and social habits, than to all other

causes combined. On the other hand, it may be said of the English, that their hostility to holidays and amusements, their total lack of every thing like provision for the relaxation of the people, their unnatural and exclusive social institutions, have defeated the natural effect of their comparatively free government, and that thus, instead of being, as they might have been, the most cultivated, moral, temperate, and happy people in Europe, they fall, in those respects, far below many of their less favored neighbors.

CHAPTER IX.

**TREATS OF THE OBLIGATIONS THAT REST ON
THOSE WHO APPROVE OF, AND ON THOSE
WHO DECRY, AMUSEMENTS, AND THE INJURY
THAT HAS RESULTED TO THE COMMUNITY,
IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE ABANDONMENT OF
ALL CONTROL OVER THEM BY THE RELIGIOUS
AND THE PRUDENT.**

WE have now reached the more practical part of our subject. Those of my readers who are still skeptical about the healthfulness of amusements, and who still believe that they may disuse them without injury, must be left so. But I believe that with far the greater part of the community, there is a growing conviction of the importance of well-regulated amusements. Indeed, for the purposes of this work, I look upon the community as divided, on this subject, into two great classes, viz., those who believe that amusements can be made useful, and those who believe that they cannot. To one or the other of those classes we all must belong.

Each of those classes, of course, are bound to follow their own convictions of what is right, and discharge the duties that thus devolve upon them. There is no neutral ground about amusements. They are either useful or useless. They are more than that. They are either useful or vicious. They exercise too great an influence to admit of our being indifferent about them. There is a great amount of time, thought, talent, and money spent upon amusements. If they can never be made useful, then all that time, all that thought, all that talent, all that money is misspent. No one of those agencies is given us to misspend, or even trifle with. They are only given us to *use*, not to throw away or abuse. If amusements cannot be made *useful*, I grant at once they are not worthy a place in our thoughts.

Those, therefore, who believe that amusements can never be made useful, have a very plain path of duty before them. They should lend themselves to the work of suppressing them at once. To be sure, that work is a hard one. Dame Partington, with her mop, defending the integrity of her domicile against an inundation of it by the sea, is

the only parallel case on record. It is recorded of that memorable contest that the sea "beat Mrs. Partington;" and I am strongly apprehensive that in such a contest the former would fare no better.

Before they decide absolutely, however, against the practicability of rendering amusements useful, I beg of them to consider, for a moment, whether they admit that we are endowed with desires for amusements, and with faculties for their enjoyment. If so, do they question whether we are so endowed for wise and benevolent ends? Let them study nature, and see if they can find, in all the works of God, any one thing that was designed for evil, and evil alone. Says Archdeacon Paley, when speaking of God's works, as seen in nature, "We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, 'This is to irritate; this to inflame; this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys; this gland to secrete the humor which forms the gout.' So in relation to the faculties of the mind.

Who has ever discovered faculties there designed to demoralize and debase us? Who, in explaining them, ever said, "This is to make you profane, this to make you intemperate, this to make you cruel, and this to make you dishonest." Or, if any one has ever said so, who has believed him?

In a word, do you not believe that the world, and all things in it, of God's creation, were made *just right*? that man, with all his powers and capabilities, was made *just right*? that every thing in nature and in man was created and designed for usefulness? that every thing in nature and in man was created and designed to bless us, and make us happy? Do you not believe that we can turn every faculty that we possess to a useful purpose, and that, if we would get the greatest good, and the greatest enjoyment from this life, we must cultivate and improve, to a greater or less extent, every faculty that has been bestowed upon us? Do you not believe that, instead of our being *unconformed* to the world, as God made it, we should be *conformed* to it? that, instead of *hating* the world as God made it, we should *love* it? instead of *shunning* its natural joys, we should

court them as so many helps in training us for usefulness and happiness? In short, do you not believe that all the evil in the world springs from the perverted use that we make of things designed for, and capable of being made highly useful?

Do you say, "Shall I use my temper, my pride, my ambition?" Yes, but you must not abuse them or pervert them. A little temper may be rendered quite useful,—may it not,—when we see the weak trampled on by the strong, or the innocent about to suffer for the guilty? There may be such a thing as a righteous indignation at sin, may there not? The school of philosophers called the *Cynics*, that I have already adverted to, tried a little reform upon nature, and discarded pride and ambition. Their history is well known. Read it, and see whether you believe that you can advantageously dispense with any of the faculties that have been bestowed upon you.

We have been endowed with desires for amusements, and with faculties for their enjoyment. Those of us who believe that those features in our character were bestowed upon us for a benevolent purpose, and hence

that amusements may be made useful, have a path of duty before them as plain as that of the other class, who decry them as useless and vicious. If they can be made useful, then the duty devolves upon us, who believe so, to endeavor to make them so. That can only be done by fostering, regulating, and controlling them. We are endowed with the faculty of speech, and are given a desire to use it. That faculty is made useful just in proportion as we make use of system in our endeavors to make it so. The savages are blessed with the same faculty, and the same desire ; but it is our schools, and our universities, that make it so much more useful to us than to them. We are endowed with faculties for making and enjoying melody. Those faculties are useful and improving just in proportion as we make use of order and system in fostering, improving, regulating, and controlling them. So we may go through and enumerate all the faculties that we possess, and, in every instance, we shall find that their usefulness depends on whether we so appreciate them as to educate and improve them upon system. The same principle holds true in every thing. You have a

field, or a vineyard, or a garden, and you let it take care of itself ; it matters not whether you believe that life has its joys, and smile on it, or are a Cynic, and frown on it ; it equally runs to waste. So it is with amusements. It matters not whether you frown on them, or approve of them ; if there is no order, system, or regularity about them, they must run to waste and be useless.

In that point of view, how has it been for centuries ? There has been some degree of system introduced into every thing but amusements. Tracts, essays, and books have been written on almost every subject that could by any means engage the attention of man, from patient and learned works on the habits of the bee, and the caterpillar, to abstruse and metaphysical speculations on the qualities of mind and matter, but not a syllable upon the best mode of conducting our amusements and making them profitable. While societies have been formed for almost every purpose under the sun, from that of distributing moral pocket-handkerchiefs, to that for discovering new worlds, no society has ever yet been organized, designed, in the slightest degree, to foster, encourage, system-

atize, regulate, or control amusements. While the wise, the great, and the good have been active and zealous in promoting plans for the improvement of the breed of swine, and for the production of superior qualities of rareripes and cabbages, they have been profoundly silent on every thing that related to the improvement of our modes of enjoyment, and the production of a race of men and women superior to the present in mental and physical development, through the agency of well-regulated exercises, sports, and diversions.

The great leading feature of our system of social amusements, that is enough of itself to account for all the disorder that reigns in relation to them, is to be found in the fact that the religious portion of the community do not even attempt to regulate or control them, much less to foster them. There may be some exceptions to this rule ; and perhaps some denominations are more alive to the importance of well-regulated amusements than others ; but the fact is nevertheless true, that, as a body, they do not look upon amusements as necessary or useful, and that

hence they more or less discountenance them.

The effect of this relic of the ascetic principle has been to withdraw the influence of the religious portion of the community from the direction and control of the amusements of the people. It has been the means of leaving the diversions of the people without the wholesome check of religion, and the abandonment of one of the great departments of moral influence into the hands of the irreligious, the young, and the thoughtless, to be pursued by them without let or hinderance. In so doing, the church has done an infinite wrong to herself, as well as the world at large. She should have considered that mankind always will have amusements of some kind, and that she could have a very important voice in determining their future character. She should have seen that, if she did not encourage and regulate them, Satan would. The great error was, that she abandoned society, and her government over social amusements, instead of standing in the midst of them and regulating them. She has deserted one of her gravest duties, and

the natural consequences of desertion of duty have followed. The church has looked upon amusements in a wrong light, and taken a wrong position with regard to them, and both are suffering in consequence. Amusements are not so healthful, nor so useful, as they would be, if the church fostered, encouraged, and regulated them ; nor is the church exercising that influence without them that she could with them.

Instead of amusements, like other things, being in the hands of the religious and the irreligious, so that one shall be a check upon the other, they are surrendered entirely into the hands of the latter. Instead of the ripened in years approving, encouraging, superintending, and regulating them, they are handed over without check to the young. Nothing in the world could be more disastrous. Let the religious community act in the same manner with regard to any thing else of that nature, and nothing could save it from perversion. Let religious men all retire from any one branch of trade, as inconsistent with their profession, and how long would it be before the character of that branch of business would decline ? Let them with-

draw their support from common schools, the newspaper press, or any thing of that nature, and it would be a sorry compliment to them to say that the character of those schools, and that press, would not deteriorate in consequence. Let them withdraw from the political arena, and who would feel the same security that he now does in the permanency of our institutions? Could the moral pressure from without do one tithe towards restraining vicious legislation that the same body of Christians could do at their posts, making their principles felt, and meeting their whole duty? Would not one vote at the ballot-box be more effectual than whole broadsides of criticism and censure from the press or the desk?

The village pastor gives no entertainments, of any kind, to his parishioners, and would as soon think of turning his parlor into a bear-garden, as to allow it to be used in the entertainment of them, in the enjoyment of the dance, or any other light and joyous amusement. The officers of the church are usually more rigid on those points than their pastor, while the members of the church seldom venture to break over the rules of self-denial

that are imposed upon them by their superiors. Those, perhaps, constitute a majority of the most influential families in the place, and the social condition of that village is fixed by those few leading individuals. Thus social amusements are effectually excluded from the firesides of the majority of the leading families in the parish. Nothing is done by them to amuse or entertain the young, the middle-aged, or the aged. Nothing is done by them to fill up those long winter evening hours, so capable of useful appropriation.

Though *they* provide no place for social amusements, is no place provided? Who does not know that that system has made the village inn, with its bar-room, as much an adjunct of the village church as the graveyard? In that respect, travel in what direction you will, the church steeple carries consolation to the thirsty traveller, for he knows that the tap-room is near. Why is this? The answer is a plain one. Men will be social. It is their nature. -If every thing festive and social is banished from the fireside, they will seek the enjoyment of each other's society somewhere else; and if no better place

offers, they will resort to the bar-room, or even the dram-shop. Not one in a thousand of those who are ruined by intemperance entered the bar-room, in the first instance, and contracted the habit, because they thirsted for the intoxicating draught. No, the habit is contracted socially. They go to the bar-room for companionship ; they go there, perhaps, to wear away a weary hour, or to escape from an unpleasant home. The excitement of the cup comes incidentally. The bar-room of a country-inn is the village drawing-room, and the host may be considered as holding evening levees in behalf of those of his neighbors who neglect to do it for themselves. Now he may be considered as keeping open house for the village pastor, now for one of the deacons, and now for another, and so on through the catalogue of those who do nothing to add to the social enjoyments of their neighbors. In such cases I am very apt to be led into a little speculation as to what would be the effect, if those village dignitaries should take the business into their own hands, and give their own entertainments. I would trust the village bar-room, and its burly host, if I were their abet-

tors, to hold their own against the combined influence of an army of temperance lecturers, sooner than I would against one liberal combination of the villagers, for a system of social enjoyments, to be had in their own houses, and calculated to fill up their leisure hours, the same as I would trust to the sun rather than to all the winds that old *Boreas* could muster to uncloak a testy traveller.

Our amusements can never be made as healthy, and as useful, as they are capable of being made, until the religious portion of the community assume their true position towards them. They must assume a regulating, controlling care over them, the same as they do over the subject of education, and business, and political matters. There must be order and system about it. This point, too, will be more fully illustrated hereafter. It is enough to say, here, that there is not a more mistaken idea in the world than that which supposes that a religious man cannot, appropriately and consistently, associate himself, in any way, with light and joyous amusements. The command is, to "rejoice before the Lord," not to be of a "sad countenance." Our hearts are the most suscep-

tible to generous sentiments when they are the warmest, and that is when they are the most filled with innocent joys. Religious exercises are never more impressive than when introduced into the social circle, where all is life, and warmth, and even gayety. If libraries, and reading-rooms, and gymnasiums, and galleries of art, and halls of science, and parties, and dancing, and museums, and theatres, are to be made useful, it must be through the agency, and under the fostering care, and regulating hand, of the wise, the prudent, and the good.

Let it not be thought that the young, the sprightly, and the gay, are the only persons that suffer in consequence of the prejudice against amusements. It is not so. You might as well say, "Sunshine and warmth may be well enough for flowers, but the sturdy oak has no need of such frivolities." No; all ages, and all classes, need them. The cause of religion suffers more than any one other interest in consequence of the unfounded prejudice against pleasures and amusements. I have already shown its fatal effects in several ways. But there is one that I have not yet touched upon, that is

more fatal to the success of Christianity than any other one thing. I allude to that strange feature in the character of the great body of Christians, that their religion does not seem to sit pleasantly and happily upon them. They do not wear it, as they would a precious jewel, where it may be observed by all that meet them. They do not clothe themselves in it as a garment every day. How seldom is religious conversation ever ventured upon on ordinary occasions! How seldom is it brought forward, except when it *must be!* How seldom do we see a man who enters into religious conversation as freely, as easily, and, apparently, as happily, as he discourses about his business! Why is this? Why is it that religion is seldom or never mentioned in common conversation, and is not really made a part of our every-day life?

The reason is obvious. Religion is made a very solemn and a very gloomy subject. Is it not so? Does your pastor, does any one, address you on the subject in the same tone of voice, with the same joyous countenance, that he addresses you on other subjects? Is not the introduction of religious conversation the signal to hush all the joyous

sentiments, and to call in all the smiles ? Is it not required ? Can it be expected that our religion will be worn by us every day, if it must be done with a cloud on our brow ? or can we be expected to obtrude it upon others, if the effect of it is to cloud their brows also ? No ! Religion can never be an every-day matter ; it can never enter into our common conversation ; it can never be a part of our lives, while it assumes its present gloomy character. And the gospel of Christ can never command that success that it is calculated to meet with, and will meet with, until that ascetic dead weight is removed. No man willingly chooses to be gloomy and sad himself, or to be the occasion of it to others. Why is it that the gospel of Christ has made so little progress in the world ? Why were the apostles, with their limited means, so much more successful than their successors with steam-presses ? Do you not believe there is a defect somewhere in presenting it ? I submit, is it not in this gloomy feature of it ? Why should not a Christian be the happiest man in the world, and wear the happiest countenance, and talk joyously about the blest abodes beyond the skies ? Can we

expect religion to be generally embraced until Christians are so?

Why should religion and religious subjects be so solemn and gloomy a matter? What is there in them to call for it? Are they any thing more than discourse about a final and a happy home, and the way there? Ought we not to look upon those distant abodes as a child looks upon his distant home, when far away, and thinks of it, dreams of it, talks of it to his companions, and finds the theme even bursting from his lips before his superiors? Compare him, as, with eye brightening and countenance beaming, he discloses his young anticipations of delight when emancipated and suffered to fly to that home of bliss, with another child, his brother, perhaps, who is alike exiled from home, but who is studiously silent on the subject when excited at all with enjoyment, and only brings it forward at set times, when he must do it; and then it is done with a countenance and a tone of voice betokening any thing but enjoying it. Which of those children would soonest interest you in that home of his? which of them would soonest tempt you to partake with him of its hospitalities

and its joys ? and which of them would give you the most lively evidence that he so loved that home, that nothing would tempt him to forfeit his title there ?

There is a defect somewhere in religious teaching. I submit that it is in that cold, gloomy, and forbidding feature of it. That one feature of it is enough to account for much of its want of success. It never can be the religion of the heart, and be diffused like water among the people, until it becomes of such a character that they can carry it with them at all times, and into all places, and find that it makes them more joyous and happy ; that it makes them warmer friends, more social neighbors and companions ; that it opens their eyes to new beauties in nature, new features of loveliness in friends, and new sources of enjoyment every where. The religion of the gospel will never pervade the earth until it becomes divested of those relics of asceticism that hang so like a dead weight about it, and resumes its primitive simplicity, conforming itself to our natures, and making it a joyous and happy religion.

CHAPTER X.

TREATS OF THE TRUE MODE OF ENJOYING
AMUSEMENTS.

THERE have been two causes at work to make amusements both corrupt and corrupting. The first is the cause that has just been considered; and the second (which has grown out of it, in a great measure) arises from what may be called the *exclusive* mode of enjoying amusements. By that expression, I mean that mode of enjoying them, by which the young appropriate to themselves one species of amusement, and the aged another, and the males another. For instance, our national holiday was, at one time, appropriated by the males to themselves exclusively; while most of the public assemblies have been very generally surrendered entirely into the hands of the young. That system is unnatural and artificial, and leads naturally to the perversion of amusements. The excesses in amusements have sprung, in a great measure, from those two causes.

The natural and only safe mode of enjoying amusements is in common. Where one sex, or any one particular class, enjoy their amusements alone, they are sure to run into excess. The reason of it is obvious. The arrangement of society into different sexes and different ages was instituted, in divine wisdom, as a means to an end. The influence of one sex upon the other, and that of different ages upon each other, was intended to accomplish a great good. Each sex, and each age, has its particular office to perform in the great work of fitting the other sex, and others of different ages, for usefulness, happiness, and honor. The division of society into man, woman, and child, father, mother, brother, and sister, is the great conservative principle in society ; they act and react upon each other like the different seasons upon the earth. Each age and each sex has its peculiar characteristics, that serve to modify and check certain mischievous tendencies in the other sex, and in others of different ages. The social circle is never so perfect as when it embraces both sexes and all ages, from the prattling infant to the hoary-headed veteran of a century. It then

is capable of giving forth every tone of social melody. If the young or the old, the fair or the hardy, are excluded, one tone is lost, and the harmony is broken. For one sex to attempt to amuse themselves agreeably and innocently alone, is like trying to make music on a one-stringed instrument ; it has about it a sameness that is tedious and annoying.

The excitement of amusements has a tendency to hurry its votaries to excess. The natural, the proper, and the sure corrective, is the union of all ages and both sexes in the diversion, so that one may modify and check the irregular tendencies of the other. By that means, we extend the area of the means of enjoyment to its utmost limit. The natural provision is thus made for the entertainment of every variety of character. No person is at all times alike. Sometimes we are disposed to playfulness, and at other times to sobriety ; and these states of feeling oftentimes change from one to the other several times in the short space of an evening's entertainment. Perhaps we begin the evening serious and end it gay, or *vice versa*. In either case, we want an outer or inner circle

to throw ourselves upon, if we would either give or derive enjoyment. The union of the aged with the young, the fair with the manly, in our diversions, brings every source of social improvement and enjoyment together—age with its gravity and experience, mid-life with its energies and its cares, and youth with its vivacity and its hopes. The one brings to the altar of enjoyment the lights and shades of the past, the other the substantial realities of the present, and the last the hopes of the future ; and it would be as hard to tell which brings the choicest viands to the feast, as it was to tell which of the Arabian princes discovered that of most value, whether it was the lens that discovered the dangerous sickness of their distant relative, or the tapestry that bore them to her presence, or the apple that wrought her cure. Each sex and each age acts and reacts upon each other, adding to and happily modifying each other's enjoyments.

I once overheard a little girl telling a youthful companion of hers that she thought thanksgiving evening the most delightful of any in the year, because then her father and mother united with her and her brothers and

sisters in the game of blind-man's-buff. I was both pleased and impressed with the remark ; and since that time I have often had occasion to notice the evident zest that parents may communicate to the amusements of their children by joining heartily with them in their diversions. I shall never forget the very delightful impression that was made on my own mind when I saw, for the first time in my life, a father, whose head was silvered with age, leading his young and beautiful daughter in the dance. Since then, I have often seen parents and children unite in the pursuit of amusements, and I always view it with delight. It always gives me higher ideas of the human affections, and seems to tend naturally to add another strong link to the ties that spring up between the parent and child.

A late traveller through our country has remarked upon the too prevalent habit that our young people have of excluding their elders from participation in their amusements. But in this the young are no more in fault than the aged. As long as the amusements of youth are frowned upon by the aged, the former will seek the enjoyment of those

pleasures by themselves,—and very naturally too. Social enjoyments depend, in a great measure, upon the united efforts of all present to give them zest. If any considerable number, or even one of the party, does not favor the mode of enjoyment resorted to, it negatives, in no small degree, the pleasure of the others. If the aged cannot see, without censuring, the light-hearted enjoyments of childhood, it is plain that the sports of children must be conducted by themselves, and without the restraints of age. But is it right for the aged to censure and discourage the innocent amusements of the young, merely because they fear that they may be carried to excess, when, by presiding at those diversions, they can effectually prevent it?

The moral influence of children upon their parents is quite as salutary as that of parents upon their children. In social life, where all ages and both sexes meet together, the influence of the one is as salutary, and as much to be desired, as the other. The influence of the young is just as much needed upon the aged, as that of the aged upon the young; and so through all of the stages of life. Each stage of a man's existence, as a general re-

mark, adds new faculties for enjoyment, and dims or removes others.

Almost every vice that afflicts society has its antidote within the social circle, when widened to its natural compass. The credulity of youth is tempered by the caution of age, while the untrusting tendencies of the latter are counteracted by the manly confidence of the former. The prodigal son and the frugal father each exert a happy influence on the other — the one arresting the generous impulses of the former, ere they degenerate into the vices of the spendthrift, and the other, by infusing a portion of his own generous warmth, arresting the covetous tendencies of the latter. The female sex are conservators every where, checking rudeness by their modesty, and promoting cheerfulness by their vivacity. They are the best antidotes to the vices of the cup and the gaming-table. If there were no amusements resorted to without the presence of the young and the fair, there would be but little to fear from those two vices. A man might be very willing to drink himself beneath the table, among his peers, who would not, for his life,

so expose himself before his wife and his children.

The effect of all ages and both sexes joining in the pursuit of amusements has been happily illustrated of late by actual experience. Formerly, our national birthday was celebrated by the men exclusively. The women were excluded from the table, at the public festivals, on those occasions; and no doubt both sexes then supposed that the arrangement was the best for the happiness and honor of each. But what was the consequence of that exclusive system of public rejoicing? The lords of creation then undertook to do, not only their own rejoicing, but that of the women, who were equally with them participants of the blessings of the event they were celebrating; and the consequence was, that they often found, before the day was over, that they had assumed a weight of responsibility that they could scarcely stagger under. The day soon became tainted with excesses, and its observance was becoming a matter of fear rather than rejoicing. But, thanks to the progress of correct principles, our celebrations are

now observed, in most cases, in the right manner. They are now taking the character of social rejoicings. Woman has been called to the banquet-table, and its excesses have ceased. Now, our public festivals are becoming scenes of real delight and enjoyment, and the sad spectacle that formerly marked their close is now very seldom witnessed. The men have now learned the vast difference, in both happiness and respectability, between gallanting the ladies from the table, and being gallanted from it by their servants. They have learned that the bright eyes and sweet smiles of the fair are far more exhilarating than the very choicest of nectar, and that the music of their voices is far more melodious than the clatter of glasses and the revelry of inebriety.

In fact, you may trace all of the amusements, from the days of Adam down to the present time, and you will find that, where the amusement was enjoyed in common, it had a conservative principle within it, that preserved it from corruption; while those that were formed on the exclusive system soon became tainted with excesses. The great stumbling-block of the English drama

has been the rude pit and the infamous galleries. The French theatre has never been deformed by such exclusive appropriation of its parts. It has no place set apart for the dissolute; while the pit, like the boxes, is appropriated to the use of both sexes. The consequence is, that there the same regard for propriety reigns, that is observable at a concert, or at a scientific lecture. One may traverse a French theatre, from one end to the other, without meeting aught to offend the eye or ear of the most chaste and delicate. In that it is infinitely above the English and American theatres; but it is well known that it does not arise from the superior morals of the French, but from seating the audience judiciously, so that the evil-disposed in the theatre are under a saving influence while there.

Our false system of amusements, like other false systems, are productive of many errors. The exclusive system, among other bad effects, delays marriages. No doubt it is deemed very politic, by managing mothers and daughters, to drop the acquaintance of their young friends as soon as they have contracted matrimony; but the policy of it is

exceedingly doubtful. It is seldom, in this country, that one can pass from the single to the married state without finding his social ties very much modified by the change. Not unfrequently the provision for social enjoyment, in the way of cotillon parties and the like, are founded on the principle of excluding married persons altogether. Marriage should ordinarily extend the sphere of the parties' means for social enjoyment, and not abridge it. As each would naturally have a social circle of their own, the union of the parties should give them access to both circles, and thus to both sources of amusement. But here it is more often the other way, and their marriage closes the door of both circles upon them.

The natural effect of this excluding young married persons from the social enjoyments of their late companions, is to make them delay marriage as long as society has more charms for them than the seclusion of married life. In proportion as the circle that they are in is endeared to them, the claims of matrimony are weakened. Hence it is observable that marriages are more frequent, and are contracted earlier in life, where the

state of society admits of but little social intercourse. Marriages are contracted earlier in the country than in cities, and among the poor and middling classes, whose sources of social amusement are limited, than among those enjoying the pleasures of a large social circle. But this would not be so, if our system of amusements were founded on the basis contended for, because, in that case, there would be the inducement to marry to extend one's means of social enjoyment. At least, the candidate would not be deterred from the altar by fear of exclusion from his present sources of happiness.

Another objection to the exclusive system is, that it leads to late indulgence and expensive entertainments. Where the amusement is enjoyed generally, by old and young, less effort is usually made for display. The natural contrast between the matron and the miss is sufficient to bestow a beauty and charm upon the one, however simply attired, and dignity and grace upon the other. The contrast between different ages and the two sexes lends an enchantment to each that is afforded them in no other way. As, in the most lovely landscape, the skilful artist not

only imbodyes the blushing rose, the tender shrub, the vigorous tree, but the wide-spread, venerable oak, and the shattered and decayed trunk, so, in society, if the young or the aged, the fair or the hardy, are missing, the view is disfigured and imperfect.

There is no plant, perhaps, so grateful to the eye as the rose ; yet a distinguished traveller has told us, that on one occasion, when he was journeying in the East, he went for miles through a continuous bed of them, and that, at last, he became weary of their gorgeous colors, and felt relieved when he once more caught sight of some of the more rough and rugged features of nature. So it is with the bloom and sparkle of youth. We love to gaze on its bright features, radiant with health, hope, and joy, but not uninterruptedly, any more than we would wish to gaze on a sky always cloudless, or on fields always green. The eye demands variety, and therein shows its adaptation to the ever-varying aspect of nature.

In a word, the natural mode of enjoying amusements is in common ; and where any amusement is found unsuited to be enjoyed in that manner, it is very seldom that it

is suited to be pursued at all. Not that every one must engage actively in every amusement, but that all should assist in modifying it by their influence. It is the duty of the aged to preside over the sports of their children, and regulate them, just as much as it is their duty to preside over and regulate their studies; and what is one's duty should always be his pleasure.

CHAPTER XI.

TREATS OF THE SUBJECT OF DANCING.

IN this connection, it may be well to consider the prejudice that exists against dancing. The nature and extent of that prejudice are well known. With some few exceptions, the whole Christian church has been arrayed against that amusement for centuries. It is true, some denominations of Christians are less rigid in that particular than others; but the general sentiment has been to disown it altogether. What occasioned this hostility, when it arose, what good it has accomplished, what evil it has prevented, is veiled in obscurity. No one has ever yet arisen, who was able to solve those mysterious questions. — In fact, there has been a most ominous silence observed by the opposers of that amusement, in respect to all those points. Dancing has not been so much talked down as frowned down. It has not been so much traduced, as an amusement, by what the religious portion of the

community have said against it, as by what they have not said. It has been banished from their firesides, more by half-expressed doubts and misgivings as to the propriety of it, and by innuendoes and ominous shakes of the head, when the subject has been brought forward, than by any positive objections that have been raised. Its opposers have very generally been in the sad state of the maid in the nursery song, who knew full well that she did not like one Mr. Fell, but, unfortunately, the reason why she could not tell.

There is nothing so subtle, and so hard to be moved, as a prejudice. You can get over or get round most any thing else but that. Continual dropping, it is said, will wear away a stone ; but would it be equally successful with a prejudice ? Faith, it is said, will "remove mountains ;" but will it remove a prejudice ? There is the same difference between contending with opinions founded on facts, and with those founded on a mere prejudice, that there is between going out to war against an army of veterans, and going out to make war upon the east wind.

But perhaps it is said that it is mere assumption to call the present hostility to

dancing a prejudice. Well, if it is not a mere prejudice, what is it? Who ever heard any substantial objection made to dancing, as an amusement, abstractedly considered. Do they say that it is an *unnatural, artificial* amusement? Do they say that it is foreign to our natures to indulge in it? No! It is an emotion, like laughing or crying. It is one of the natural modes given us to communicate our feelings and sentiments. With it, in pantomime, we testify the emotions of love, joy, gratitude, and delight. So obvious is this, that it has settled into a figure of speech; and when we would speak of one as expressing the highest delight, we say, "He danced for joy." In all ages of the world, and among all nations, man has been found to make use of rhythm, or measured language, and the dance, or measured movements, to express the most elevated feelings of love, joy, devotion, or patriotism. It comes more natural to the child to dance than to talk. We can see the sentiment of it in the infant long before he can speak. No sooner is he awake to joyful emotion, than he testifies his happiness by waving his arms and his feet in measured movements. At a later age, his

first exhibition of unexpected and intense delight is instinctive measured movements — leaping and dancing.

It is unquestionably true that the dance was employed by the Jews as a religious rite. We find Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, with her women, celebrating the most glorious era in Jewish history by going out "with timbrel, and with dances;" * and the inspired Psalmist not only engaged in the dance himself as a testimony of exalted religious joy on the occasion of bringing up the ark,† but inculcated it as a fit and acceptable act of worship in that closing psalm of his where he exhorts all the living to "praise God with the sound of the trumpet," "with the psaltery and harp," "with the timbrel and dance." It was, finally, directly and signally sanctioned by Jehovah himself, as a fit and appropriate act of devotional joy, in the judgment he pronounced on Michal, Saul's daughter, when she reproved King David for that act of dancing before the ark. She, like many now-a-days, appeared to disapprove of that mode of testifying joy ; but

* Ex. 15 : 20.

† 1 Chron. 15 : 29.

God did not, and punished her for her cynical conduct on that occasion by dooming her to perpetual barrenness.* She was evidently a great many centuries in advance of her age.

The Scriptures are full of allusions to the dance, as expressive of the highest religious joy. When David returned in triumph, after the slaughter of the Philistines, we are told that women came out of all the cities of Israel, and greeted him with "singing and dancing;" † and when the pious Psalmist himself returned thanks to God for his preserving and sustaining goodness, he speaks of his "mourning" having been turned into "dancing." ‡ It is used in the same sense, by the prophet Jeremiah, in his lamentations over fallen Israel, when he says, "The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning." § Our Savior evidently sanctions it, as a token of the highest gratitude and joy, when he uses it to illustrate the warmth with which a returning sinner should be greeted, in that most expressive and sublime

* 2 Sam. 6 : 22, 23.

† Psalm 30 : 11.

† 1 Sam. 18 : 6.

§ Lam. 5 : 14.

allegory of his, the parable of the prodigal son.*

The religion of the new dispensation was of a more didactic character than that of the old, and hence the dance was less suited to its genius and spirit. For that cause, combined, it may be, with other causes, the early Christians excluded it from their ceremonies of worship. The fact that it had very generally been used in idolatrous worship might, perhaps, have strengthened their opposition to it. But whatever might have been the cause of their opposition, it is certain that they did accomplish its exclusion from the ceremonies of Christian worship ; and so far they unquestionably did a very proper act. It may be that the prejudice against it as an *amusement* arose out of the effort to exclude it from the church as a *religious rite*. We know how hard it is to break up old customs and habits. The dance, in that case, had been connected with religious worship so long, that it had every thing to plead for it. It had become so much a part of every man's ideas of worship, that, even upon his conver-

* Luke 15 : 26.

sion to Christianity, that habit naturally followed him. It is easier to change a man's principles than his habits,—the same as it is "easier to say than to do." In that case, the early Christians *willed* its exclusion from the church ceremonies; but to will it was far easier than to accomplish it.

They were attempting a reform; and, like other reforms, it took sturdy blows to effect it. Reforms are hardly ever accomplished entirely by mild means. Reformation are apt to beget strife, ill-will, and at last false positions on both sides. The reformers, as well as the reformed, are very apt to take extreme ground. The new school generally look all on one side, and the old school all on the other, when they each ought to look on both sides. The reformers, under Luther, in their zeal to correct the abuses of picture and crucifix worship, actually created a prejudice against that beautiful and touching emblem of our faith, the cross, and against beautifying our churches, which centuries have not been able to efface. The Puritans, in their zeal against the abuses of the Christmas holidays, were driven, at last, into the extreme of denouncing that time-honored

and never-to-be-forgotten holiday itself. So it has been in the case of almost all the reforms which are recorded. May we not suppose that, in the same way, the early Christians were made to carry their opposition to dancing to an extreme? They found it difficult to suppress it as a devotional rite, while they admitted it to be innocent as an act of amusement; and hence they were led, insensibly, to strike deeper and deeper towards the root of the supposed evil, until they ended in denouncing it as impious and sinful, both as a devotional and social exercise.

But in whatever way the prejudice against dancing first arose, it is certain that such a prejudice exists, and that it has existed for centuries. It is also certain that it has had the effect to exclude the dance from the firesides of the great body of professing Christians. They early banished it from their family hearthstones as an unsuitable amusement for themselves or their children. Did their opposition to it result in any substantial good? No! Their opposition scarcely checked it beyond their own circle. The young have always rebelled against that

unnatural edict, and participated more or less in the amusement. To be sure, in most instances, they have not been allowed to enjoy it at their own firesides, and under the influence of their parents, and hence have not enjoyed it so often, nor so regularly, nor under the most favorable circumstances. The only thing really accomplished by the opposition to dancing, has been to change the place of enjoying it from the *family circle* to the *public hall*. Dancing the young always have had, and always will have ; and if they have not had it in one place, they have generally succeeded in having it in another. When it was excluded from the family circle, the present system of public dancing parties arose. The difference between the two systems, in the conservative influences that surround them, is incalculable. Under the former system, there is the influence derived from the associations of a private residence, and the presence of the aged and the prudent to check every tendency to rudeness and to excess, and keep the amusement within reasonable bounds ; while, under the latter system, no such influences are at work,

but every thing has a tendency to hurry those engaged in the amusement on to excess.

It is under such circumstances that this amusement comes down to us. It is not strange that it should find opposers now, after having been so long exiled from its natural home in the family circle. By force of the prejudice against it, it has so long been pursued in public places, under the most adverse influences, that it is a source of wonder that it has become no further perverted. No other amusement could have been subjected to such an ordeal, and been prejudiced so little. It has been preserved from entire perversion by the very nature of the amusement, accompanied, as it always is, wherever it is enjoyed, by the conservative influence of woman. If, for the same time, all of our political or religious meetings had been held in public places, so contiguous to the accompaniments of intemperance, as the dance has, it is doubtful whether those agencies of good would not have been as instrumental of evil as has the dance.

Notwithstanding the unfavorable influences that surrounded the amusement of

dancing, in those places where it was unwisely excluded from the family circle, yet I have no doubt that its influence, on the whole, has been favorable to the best interest of man. It is true, no very satisfactory conclusion, upon that point, can be drawn from history; but yet I think enough may be gleaned from its pages to convince us that mankind require a certain amount of excitement, in the nature of amusement, and that if they do not have it of one kind, they will of another. Some resort to devotion, some to literature, some to music, some to dancing, some to painting, sculpture, or poetry, some to gambling, and some to drinking, and some to other and worse modes of excitement. There is no nation, people, community, or individual, scarcely, without some one leading source of excitement, in the nature of amusement, if it is nothing more than tea-drinking or smoking. This seems to be a law of our nature.

If this be so, our object should be to guide the public into useful, or, at least, harmless sources of excitement. He is the greatest philosopher, as well as the greatest philanthropist, who seeks to follow nature,

and teach others to do the same, rather than to engage in the Quixotic undertaking of controlling it. That we do invariably *have* some such excitement, and that we do *require* it, is too plain for argument. More lives are lost for want of exercise than by hard labor, ten to one. We have our gymnasiums, riding, swimming, boxing, and fencing schools; our boat clubs, and bowling-alleys, and promenades; and why are all of these places of amusement resorted to and approved of, if it is not a law of our nature to demand exercise in the nature of amusement? Is not dancing as healthy an exercise as either of them?

If we look upon dancing in that light merely, we shall find it vastly superior, in many respects, to any of the amusements just named. Most of those are, in a measure, necessarily pursued by the sexes separately; and that is a serious objection to any amusement. It would be a good rule to select amusements, always, with reference to that feature in them, and choose none but those which not only admit of being enjoyed in common, but that, in some degree, create a necessity for it. Neither sex enjoys an

amusement so rationally, or so innocently, alone, as they do in company with the other sex. The sexes always exert a happy influence on each other; and more than one half of all the vice that affects society, results from the sexes separating in the pursuit of their amusements. Those great pests of society, gambling and intemperance, seldom, if ever, show their hideous features in the drawing-room, while they are as seldom entirely strangers to the club-room. In that point of view, the dance is superior to most other modes of enjoyment connected with exercise.

It is equally superior to almost every other mode of obtaining exercise, in another particular. In mere gymnastic exercises, in rowing, riding, swimming, skating, and other hardy sports of the same character, exercise alone is obtained. A man might pursue some of those amusements all his lifetime, and yet never get any improvement from them in the way of fitting him for social intercourse. They would leave him as much of a boor as they found him, and generally more so. On the other hand, the art of dancing, when properly taught and practised, has

a direct tendency to soften and refine the manners, and make us more and more solicitous, as well as better able, to minister to the enjoyment of those around us. There is probably no other amusement that exerts so happy an influence in those respects as dancing, and it has for centuries been cultivated for that purpose.

But it is not only bad policy, as a moral movement, to foster amusements that separate the sexes, but it is selfish in man to select those that cannot be enjoyed in common, especially when we consider how fatally the want of exercise preys upon the beauty, and even upon the health, of our fair countrywomen, robbing them, in most instances, of half their charms before they have reached the meridian of life. They need to participate in all the amusements of man, for the very reason that they get less than he does of the needful exercise and excitement from their daily duties. Hence they should be participants in all the amusements of the sterner sex; and when an amusement is unsuited to enjoyment in common, in most cases, it should be laid aside, as unsuited for enjoyment at all.

If we were more in the habit of obtaining both exercise and enjoyment, daily, from the dance, around the family hearth, I have no doubt it would make us all happier and better, more graceful in our manners, more elastic in our spirits, more temperate in our habits, more attached to our homes and kindred, and far more cheerful and healthy, particularly if we would pursue the amusement as much as our climate would allow, in the open air, as it is enjoyed in the south of Europe.

It is to the want of such amusements around the family hearths, in our New England villages, that is to be ascribed the strange feeling of indifference with which the New England home is deserted, to stray off and settle in far distant wilds. Such is not the feeling in those countries where they enjoy the dance, and other amusements, in the family circle almost daily. It is not mere kind and affectionate intercourse between kindred, around the family hearth, that awakens those strong local and family attachments, that make the scenes and friends of our childhood peculiarly dear to us. It requires something more than that. Home

and friends are remembered more by the common enjoyments, or even common sorrows, that have been participated in, and shared by the family, than by all other things put together. Devotion, study, amusements, any thing that is pursued in common by old and young, around the family altar, is productive of strong home feelings.

We see this principle illustrated in the strong local and family attachments of the members of religious families, where the children early become religiously interested ; we see the same feeling manifested among members of churches who stately commune together, at any certain place ; we are all conscious of feeling it in relation to the companions of our youthful sports ; and we see it evidenced very strongly, now and then, in the strong home feeling that is exhibited in families where the parents make it a point to make home the happiest place for their children, and to that end feed their natural appetites for amusements ; and not only countenance them, but lead in their enjoyment. Any thing that enlists all hearts in a given circle of acquaintances, and makes them sympathize together, whether in common

joys or common sorrows, creates associations, that, whether joyous or painful, are still dear to them, and binds them together with cords of love that neither time nor distance can entirely rend asunder.

It is apparent that the dance, when rightly conducted, is calculated to be an efficient aid in improving and refining the manners of a people, and smoothing the way to that free, and yet respectful and delicate intercourse between the sexes, that is so necessary for their highest happiness and their highest good. In the East, where woman has always been degraded, the dance has never been enjoyed by the two sexes in common. They have always separated in the practice and enjoyment of it. If history threw no light upon the point, I should say, without hesitation, that the introduction of the dance, in Oriental countries, as we enjoy it, would have a tendency to exalt woman there, as she has been exalted here. But we are not left to unaided reason to determine that point. The introduction of the dance into Europe, as a social amusement, to be enjoyed by the sexes in common, was followed immediately by the elevation of woman to her

natural and true sphere in society. About the beginning of the tenth century, when the minstrel art first began to be exercised by the troubadours, and woman became their theme of panegyric, the dance began to be introduced into the courts of the feudal lords, as a polite accomplishment, and as a social amusement. Before that time, I know of no reason to believe that it had ever been so cultivated or enjoyed, even among the Greeks and the Romans.

Those two things, the minstrel's art and the dance, were the two great agencies in bringing about that wonderful state of society that I have before alluded to, in another connection, that existed from the tenth to the thirteenth century, and is known as the age of chivalry. Woman, from being degraded, came to be caressed and idolized. The two sexes, then, for the first time, through the agency of the song and the dance, really and truly became conscious how capable they were of ministering to each other's enjoyments, socially and intellectually, and they were dazzled with the brilliancy of the new light that burst upon them. Before that time, the sterner sex had usurped every

thing to themselves. The age of chivalry changed that false feature in society, and man, then, not only shared his amusements with the gentler sex, but deferred to them in every thing that related to his enjoyments. When he hawked or hunted, they accompanied him. When he engaged in the tilt and tournament, they presided, and adjudged the crown of honor to the victors. When he engaged in the dance, they accompanied him, and thus added to and shared in that source of amusement.

We have seen, in a former chapter, that with that age commenced a marked improvement in almost every thing that adorns society. The union of the sexes in the dance, and in the pursuit of other amusements, so refined the manners and subdued the rude passions of the barons, and knights, and those of their retainers who came within the sphere of its influence, as to check the spirit of war among them, and induce the cultivation of all of the arts of peace; so that, when the inhabitants of Provence, Lower Burgundy, Barcelona, Catalonia, and some provinces in Germany, were enjoying all the benefits of comparative civilization and

peace, the more northern nations of Europe were sunk in barbarism, and distracted with violence and wars.

There, where dancing was first enjoyed by the people as a leading social amusement, it has ever since held its place among them as the most popular of their social diversions; and there we still see the same evidences of its subduing and refining tendencies that we trace in the history of chivalry. There, now, as then, there is observable, among all classes of the people, a grace and refinement of manners that is scarcely found any where else. Throughout all of France, Spain, and Germany, the dance is enjoyed, very generally, by all classes, as a daily diversion, that they resort to for relaxation and amusement, as we do to the pages of the newspaper; and it may be considered to hold the same relation to them, in the cultivation of their manners, that the latter holds to us in the cultivation of our minds. If they had more newspapers, and less dancing, and we had less newspapers, and more dancing, I have no doubt both would be benefited by the change. Reading and dancing have each their own work to do, that neither of them

can do for the other. One educates and strengthens the mind, and the other does the same for the body. We complain of foreign travellers because they publish strictures upon our social habits and manners ; but is it not true that the mass of the people on the continent of Europe are in advance of us in social culture, though infinitely behind us in intellectual attainments, and that hence arise those strictures of which we complain ? Our common schools may make us an intelligent people, but they are no more calculated to make us a polished and refined people than music and dancing are to make us scientific and learned. There is no disguising the fact, that, in those countries where the dance is excluded, in a great measure, from the family circle, the people are less easy, graceful, and polished in their manners, than the people of those countries where it is enjoyed as a daily amusement ; that they have less strong local and personal attachments ; that they are less temperate in their habits ; more restless and discontented, though better conditioned by far, and an age behind them in the accomplishments of vocal and instrumental music,

as well as in what has sometimes been called the poetry of motion.

But, after all has been said, the candid inquirer will find the best evidence of the utility of dancing, when enjoyed in a rational way around the family hearth, to be to call to mind the history of those families where it has been so enjoyed, and then to compare them with families similarly situated, from whose circle the dance has been excluded. I believe that there are but few persons whose list of acquaintances, and range of observation, will not furnish them with numerous illustrations of the evil effects of excluding, and the good effects of fostering, amusements in the family circle, and particularly that of dancing.

In fine, it is plain that we are just as much born to dance as we are to talk, laugh, cry, run, walk, ride, swim, jump, imitate, and do a score of other things. It is, like those, a natural endowment bestowed on us for wise and benevolent ends. To be sure, a man may refuse to cultivate and improve it, and be, perhaps, a model of perfection; and so he might be without using his faculty of laughing or of crying, of riding or of swimming;

but it no more proves that those faculties are useless, than it does that eyes, and bits, and smoothing planes, are quite unnecessary, because a blind man has been known to make a finely-toned violin with no other tools besides a handsaw and a penknife. I do not wish to be understood to contend that a family, or a community, may not be virtuous, contented, and happy, polished and refined, without the assistance of the dance, because there are "more ways than one" to do the most of things. I only say that it is an innocent amusement when enjoyed in the way here contended for, and that it is one of the readiest and best instruments bestowed on us by nature, to soften, polish, and refine the manners; to give grace, ease, and elasticity to the movements of the body; to create a healthy excitement to the system, and to smooth the way to a free, yet healthful, social intercourse between the sexes. I grant that, like all those other faculties that have been named, it may be abused; but I insist that the prolific cause of the present abuses that flow from it, is the unnatural and vicious prejudice that exists against it. Correct the prejudice and you correct the amusement.

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CHAPTER XII.

TREATS OF THE PROPRIETY OF FOSTERING
THEATRICAL ENTERTAINMENTS.

ANOTHER leading amusement, that demands our consideration, is that of the drama. There is no other one amusement that exerts so wide an influence as that ; so, too, there is no other one amusement that is so universally discountenanced by the Christian church. Yet the drama had a religious origin. In its earliest history, it is found employed by the ancient Grecians, in their secret religious assemblies, in illustrating their mythological fables. Indeed, the sentiment and spirit of the drama are observable in the religious rites and ceremonies of all the ancient nations and tribes with whose history we have been made acquainted ; but it remained for the Grecians to reduce it to a science, and to give it laws. They first raised it from mere pantomimic action, dancing, and waving the arms, and posturizing, as used by man in a rude state, and extended

its scope until, under the influence of those great dramatic masters, *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, it took its place as the leading intellectual amusement among that great and refined people.

We find the drama, among the Romans, employed, also, at an early age, in illustrating their religious fables, and in conducting their religious ceremonies. To be sure, in both the Grecian and the Roman states, the drama, as it rose in importance, and became, more and more, a popular and general amusement, was diverted from its original connection with religious observances. It is true, too, that we there see the drama connected with the religion of idolaters only; but yet we must remember that the important inquiry for us, is not so much whether it has been found associated with this or that form of religious worship, as it is whether it has been found naturally associating itself with man's *religious nature*, and *aiding* him, in each and every form, in which his uneducated mind has sought to do homage to a higher power.

But the modern, as well as the ancient drama had, also, a religious origin. We find the first rude effort to give it system and

laws in the **MYSTERIES** and **MIRACLES** of the middle ages. Those were dramatic representations of a religious character, in which the ecclesiastics of that day were the authors and performers. Those dramas took their name from the character and design of those performances, which were to illustrate the mysterious doctrines of Christianity, and give a lively picture of the wonderful miracles wrought by its Founder and his apostles. These exhibitions came into vogue in the twelfth century, and from that time became very popular as a religious diversion, exercise, and amusement, at public festivals, and on great and solemn occasions. Some of those performances lasted several days, and were sometimes intended to illustrate whole ages of Scripture history. The *Corpus Christi*, the famous Coventry mystery, begins with the creation, and ends with the judgment-day. Those sort of allegorical plays have ever since maintained their place, to a greater or less extent, in the public festivals of the Roman church, and are now often employed to give *eclat* to those occasions in many Catholic countries.

The mysteries and the miracles were suc-

ceeded by the **MORALITIES**. The latter, like the former, were rude dramatic performances, conducted, generally, by the lower orders of the clergy. The entertainments were more didactic in their character than the former, consisting of moral discourses, and dialogues between such characters as Hope, Faith, Charity, Love, and other of the Christian graces, personified, while the subordinate parts of the play, designed to give point and force to the first, and to amuse the audience, were carried on by Satan, and his imps, under the cognomen of Jealousy, Pride, Gluttony, Lust, Envy, Hate, and their brethren, the other evil passions.

The moralities of the middle ages at length ripened into what has been called the **MASQUE**, or the **MASQUERADE**, a more elegant and imaginative effort of the dramatic art than any thing that had preceded it in Northern Europe. It became a fashionable amusement, in England, in the sixteenth century, being represented on the stage by the first persons at court, with music and dancing, dialogues, costumes, and scenery, while at the same time the French drama was undergoing a series of changes, sometimes improv-

ing, and sometimes deteriorating, until about the beginning of the sixteenth century, when it began to assume its present form, under the influence of Jodelle, a dramatic writer, and a disciple of the Greek dramatists. Racine, Moliere, and Voltaire, in France, and Shakspeare, Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, in England, at length, by their unequalled, but sometimes misdirected, genius, placed the drama on its present foundation.

In tracing the history of the drama, we find it, like every thing else that has a natural origin, keeping pace with man's improvement. It found man in a rude state, and it partook of his character, and was conceived and executed rudely also. As man progressed in knowledge and civilization, the drama underwent improvement. Its history reveals the usual infirmities that attend all human institutions. Its tendencies were oftentimes licentious and demoralizing ; but, upon the whole, it is not to be doubted but that it has been greatly instrumental in instructing and elevating the nations that have employed it. Beginning with the Grecians, we find it accompanying them, and the people of every other nation that has risen since

their time, from barbarism to eminence in the arts and in civilization ; and, in general, you will find the state of the drama, in some measure, evidencing the state of the people in intellectual culture and improvement. The condition of England, France, Germany, and that of our own country, among the modern nations, and Greece and Rome among the ancient, furnish the best commentary on the influence of the drama. Where the stage has been left free, it has shed a light among the people, that has always tended, on the whole, to their elevation and improvement. In those states where the drama is subject to the iron rule of weak and ignorant but tyrannical censors, so that every dramatist writes, and every actor recites, with a halter around his neck, as in Italy, Austria, and Russia, darkness still broods over the land ; while in those countries where the drama is unknown, there is as little progress among the people as could be wished for by the most ardent admirer of savage life.

If the modern drama, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, was so licentious, that even the civil authorities interfered, and closed the theatres, and imprisoned the ac-

tors, it must not be forgotten what was then the state of society. If history can be relied upon, the drama could then scarcely "hold the mirror up to nature," as then exhibited in the lives of the people, not omitting the ecclesiastics, without revealing a state of society so corrupt as to make their exhibitions objectionable. Hence, when we say that the theatre was then corrupt, we only say that it was not behind the times.

The hostility of the religious portion of the community to the drama commenced in the Catholic church, before the reformation, and no doubt, in the first instance, took its rise, in no small degree, from the fact that the drama, in its hits at the vices and follies of the age, could not well help disturbing, occasionally, that redoubtable old gentleman, the pope, and his trusty ecclesiastics, who had then, in imitation of an enterprising but humble insect, so woven their web in every corner and crevice of the social edifice, that no one could move a step, or blow a breath, without interfering with them. Woe, then, to the poor layman of a fly who once got fairly entangled in the meshes of their web. No doubt that hostility was increased and

strengthened too often by the licentiousness of those entertainments, until it ripened into a fixed hostility that no time or change of circumstances has been able to overcome. The Protestants adopted and cherished that hostility.

But however the present hostility to dramatic entertainments first arose, it is certain that such a hostility does now actually exist, and that, by reason of it, the drama is, and has been, for centuries, discountenanced by the great body of the Christian church. The Catholic church, for several centuries, has openly opposed it, and the Protestant church has universally been hostile to all such amusements. The former, for a long period of time, even refused Christian burial to actors; and the Puritans, while in power, under Cromwell, prohibited dramatic entertainments altogether. It is now very seldom that members of what are called the evangelical denominations patronize, or, in any way, lend their sanction to such entertainments. Hence, for centuries, no attempt has been made to exercise any controlling influence over that amusement by the religious community; and, accordingly,

like the dance, it has had its own way in every thing.

If it has not been made useful in strengthening Satan's kingdom, it is his own fault; or, at least, the church is not in any way to blame for it, since they have given him the entire management of that great engine of moral influence.

Notwithstanding those seeming discouragements, the drama has flourished in both Catholic and Protestant countries, and for centuries has maintained its place as the leading amusement of the most cultivated classes in the civilized world. Like dancing, although denounced, it has never sought concealment, but has always been pursued as an amusement in the most public manner. Centuries of censure and denouncement of it have not resulted in affixing any odium upon it. It has always numbered among its votaries the most cultivated classes in society. While the votaries of the cup and the gaming-table, and of vices of a kindred character, have always cowered under the rebuke of the Christian world, and met with a colder reception in society for participating in them, no such mode of discountenancing the the-

atre has ever been resorted to. The theatre-going portion of the public have never suffered in character *merely* because they frequented that place of amusement ; but, on the other hand, the society of its principal supporters has generally been more eagerly sought for than that of any other class.

The question that naturally suggests itself to every mind in this connection is this — Has the Christian church acted wisely in discountenancing the drama ?

To answer that question satisfactorily, we must dismiss all prejudice, and consent to look at the first principles of the drama, and see what it is capable of being made, as well as what it has been made. Our first inquiry should be, Are dramatic exhibitions naturally and necessarily corrupting, just the same as gambling, drinking, and other acknowledged vices ? If they are, the whole inquiry is ended — the church has taken the right stand, and dramatic entertainments should be resisted at all hazards. Whatever is, in itself, a vice, should never be countenanced. No set of peculiar circumstances can make vice commendable.

To satisfy ourselves that there is nothing

naturally pernicious in the dramatic art, we have only to consider for a moment the distinguishing features of the drama. A play is no more nor less than a chapter in history, as *Richard Third*; or a romance, as *Romeo and Juliet*; or an *exposé* of social life and manners, as *Paul Pry*, or the *School for Scandal*. If those plays had not reached the public in the dramatic form, they would, undoubtedly, have reached it in the form of history, or romance, or would have found a place in a magazine, in the form of a story. There is no particular reason why dramatic literature should not be as pure as any other literature, except a reason that I shall by-and-by discuss.

The difference between the same story, when presented to us from the pen of a novelist, and when presented by a dramatist, is this — the former leaves little or nothing to inference, or to imagination. He thinks, reasons, infers, imagines, and draws conclusions for us. His hero and his heroine are no beings of fancy to us, though they might have been to him; for every look, feature, word, act, and thought, of theirs has been carefully noted for us. So thorough and

minute, in those particulars, is the work of the novelist, that it is to be questioned whether the greater part of the novel-reading public are not better acquainted with the secret characters of many of the heroes of romance, than they are with their own. Not so with dramatic writings. There the imagination of the mere *reader* is called into the most intense exercise.

The dramatist gives you the names of certain speakers, and their titles, and tells you that they are now in a room, a court, or a street, and bids you listen to their discourse. Who they are, how they appear, what is their purpose and design, and what their bearing, he does not deign to inform you, but leaves you to gather all that from what they say. The dramatist, unlike every other artist that paints for the mind, gives a sketch of the *soul* of the living, breathing man, and leaves the reader to clothe that soul in a fitting body and a fitting costume, and invest him with a fitting bearing and presence. The characters in a play, the *dramatis personæ*; are, then, just what you, in the fertility and truthfulness of your imagination, are pleased to make them. It is from that cause, that, while we turn with

displeasure from the second perusal of the most gifted efforts of the novelist, we return, again and again, with renewed delight, to the pages of the same drama. We have mastered the hero of the romance at the first reading, and he stands before us the same unalterable Hector or Mortimer that the poet or the novelist made him. Not so the hero of the dramatic art. His form, his features, his eye, his bearing, his costume, his every thing, like battle scenes in old paintings, reveal themselves to us, more and more, as we gain better and better opportunities of inspection, and become more and more familiar with them. It is for that reason that no well-defined historic character, like Cato, Henry VIII., or Cardinal Wolsey, can ever enlist our thoughts, or hold their place upon the stage, like those half-fabulous historic characters, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Duncan, and Falstaff, whose every form, lineament, and shade of character, are left entirely in our hands, to be sketched by the actor, or by our own imaginations, with a free and unfettered pencil.

To relieve the mind from that intense tax upon it, in thus laboring to embody the

thoughts of the dramatist, and to give form and reality to all the hurried incidents of the play, we resort to the stage, with its actors, its costumes, and its scenery. They are designed to do the work that is otherwise thrown upon the imagination. They clothe with life those unimbodied spirits that before stalked the stage unseen, and whose presence was only evidenced to us by the thoughts they uttered. For the time, we surrender our minds to them, and take for our own their conceptions of the characters in the play. Hence it is that we never tire in seeing the same drama presented by different actors, since no two minds can conceive or draw the same characters precisely alike.

The drama, then, is only another mode of teaching, than through those usual channels, the living voice and the printed page. We go to the stage, instead of books, for historic and moral instruction, and for amusement. We are *there* taught through the medium of the *eye*, as well as through our other senses. We go there, rather than to Plutarch, for vivid conceptions of that fearful and turbulent scene, where Cæsar fell by the hand of

Brutus. We there *see* the Roman capital, the frenzied populace, the bleeding dictator, his dismayed friends, and the dreadful workings of intense, and artful, but ill-concealed ambition. Another of our senses is thus brought to our aid in the great work of studying the annals of the past. So in comedy ; so in farce. In both, we are brought to *see* rather than hear of those modes of life, of manners, and of dress, of which we can learn but little more, by other modes of teaching, than a blind man can learn of colors. The representation of a play on the stage is only another mode of reading it, less taxing to the intellect than reading it in the ordinary manner. The exhibition on the stage must be just as pure as the play. In most cases it is more so. Most of the old plays, and particularly those of Shakspeare, are pruned for the stage. It is a silly piece of affectation for persons to read, comment on, and pretend to admire, the printed plays of Shakspeare, and yet denounce their exhibition on the stage with appropriate costumes and scenery. They might as well pretend that there is no great harm in getting a little intoxicated occasionally, if it is done in a quiet

way, in your own cellar, but the mischief lies in doing it publicly at the sideboard.

The theatre, as it is, and has been conducted for years, is a school of vice ; and it is no wonder that it is so. When the religious portion of the community cast it off entirely, and it had, and could have, no hope of any patronage from that quarter, it naturally and inevitably chose its entertainment to suit its patrons. With no Christian sentiment from pit to gallery to cater for, what could be expected, but that the viands would be chosen for the palate of its auditors ? Theatres are the creatures of the public, the same as are our lyceums and other places of public entertainment.

Let those who conduct them but know who their audience is to be, and care will be taken that the sentiments of that audience are reflected in the entertainment. When Christian burial was denied to the actor, merely because he was an actor, and all patronage from the moral and religious classes steadily withheld, it was calculated to throw the drama into irresponsible hands. The theatre was, in that manner, cast adrift, without one saving religious influence before or

behind the scenes. What could be expected of it under such circumstances? Is it not a wonder that it is no worse?

Suppose the moral and religious part of the community should take the same course with regard to the present prevailing amusements, *concerts* and *lectures*, and should refuse to countenance them. Is it to be supposed, for a moment, that the result would be any other than to change the character of those entertainments? They breathe a healthy morality now. Why is it? Because the influence of the religious classes is not pledged against them. The lecturer knows that on the character of his lecture depends the patronage of that class of the community, and he prepares his lecture accordingly. Let the church pledge herself against all itinerant lecturers, and the moral stamp and healthful tone of that instructive source of amusement would sink immediately. It would not stop the mouths of the lecturers, nor empty the seats of the lecture-rooms, but the change would be in the audience and the lecture. A more stimulating repast would be furnished, and the vacated seats of the church would be filled, constantly, by a class of

persons, who, before, were, from time to time, venturing in, and being educated to relish wholesome instruction.

The burden of the whole is, *that the church should never be pledged, either expressly or impliedly, against any thing that is not wrong in itself.* Where there is only a perversion of the object, every man should be left free to act, in relation to it, according to the dictates of his own conscience. Any other course is only calculated to throw one and another, of the great moral engines of influence and usefulness, into unworthy hands, to be wielded by them without check or control.

For centuries, this great engine of public influence has been entirely surrendered into the hands of those making no pretension to possessing any peculiar regard for religion. The taste of that class, and of no other, has necessarily been consulted by authors, managers, and actors. The whole arrangements of the theatre have been made with a view to please and gratify that class alone. There is no reason why the lecture and concert-rooms of our cities should not have the same immoral arrangements of saloons, bars, pits, and galleries, that are common to theatres,

except that they are catering for a different audience. The religious classes are not pledged against the former, and hence they offer houses arranged to meet their moral sentiments. Let those who now disown theatres, but say the word, and the theatre can be made as pure, and as chaste, in all its arrangements, as are the lecture and the concert-rooms ; but it must be by *patronage*, and not by *denunciation*. Those who conduct them must feel assured, that, if they present pure and moral entertainments, the public will have the manliness to look at the *thing*, and not childishly to be frightened with the mere *name*. Let them once know that there is no class in the community pledged against them, and that on the character of their houses and their entertainments depend the influence and the patronage of the best classes, and, rely upon it, there would be no longer a bar and gallery for the dissolute, or a pit for the mob, but the theatre-room would be made to conform, as it must do before it can be purified, to the common lecture and concert-room, where the audience is so distributed that each is a check upon the other. Plays would then be both written and

pruned to meet the improved character of the audience.

The denunciation of theatres, as they are, is right, and no one should patronize them while they are arranged and conducted as they are ; but it is not only silly, but wicked, for the religious portion of the community to maintain their present position towards the drama. Theatres, in some shape, are just as much a fixture in all large cities as are the church and the school-house. They will continue to send forth their influence as regularly and as long as the latter do. It is for Christians to say what shall be the character of that influence.

They can make theatres useful if they please, but not by sulky looks. They must take hold manfully and reform them. Satan has had the management of the drama long enough : it is now time that it should pass into other hands. If it is said that that cannot be done, we may well ask, Why not ? Is not the theatre governed by the same laws that govern other things ? Is it not conducted for gain ? and does not the gains of those who conduct them depend upon pleasing the public ? Is not the patronage of the best

classes always the most desirable, both for respectability and profit? It can be done; it ought to be done; and, what is more, it must be done, before any serious check can be given to the present inroads of vice.

If those, in all our large cities, who believe that the drama can be made an instrument of good, will unite in an attempt to present it in an unobjectionable form, it will soon be seen how much more popular virtue is than vice. The result need not be looked for as a matter of experiment, but as a matter of certainty. We are only to follow the lessons of experience. We are simply to model our theatre-rooms on the plan of our lecture-rooms. Let each ticket entitle the holder to any unappropriated seat in the house, the same as does a ticket to a lecture or a concert. Let there be no appointed place for the disorderly and dissolute. If any of either of those classes choose to attend, such an arrangement so surrounds them by the orderly and the virtuous, that, for the time, they are sure to preserve the outward appearances of virtue. Impurity never shows itself alone, unaided and unsustained, in the view of the virtuous. The same persons who would be the very

leaders in disorder in the pit or in the gallery, where they were surrounded by their fellows, would be patterns, in most cases, of order and sobriety, when surrounded by those whom they deemed their superiors. This is being demonstrated, in all our public assemblies, every day, in every year. We have our free churches, free lectures, free concerts, where all classes are invited to attend, and do attend, and are seated together. All is order and quiet, as it should be. But let that audience be classed, and the children sent to one part of the house, the men to another, the women to another, and the profligate to another, and what could be expected from them, under such circumstances, but riot and confusion. The truth is, that the different sexes, and those of different ages, possess each a healthful check upon the other class, and they must be distributed naturally at public places, if you would have them behave naturally ; and, if no control is exercised over an audience, composed of all ages and both sexes, there is little to fear but that they will so select their seats, as to mutually exercise a healthful influence on each other.

So far for the theatre before the drop scene. Cannot the *stage* be purified? Why not? What is to prevent our actors from being respectable and virtuous citizens, if encouraged to be so? While the best part of the community are unwilling to allow that an actor can be a good citizen, and a virtuous man, so far as they are concerned, they afford no encouragement to that class to aim after such excellence. If it is said that they ought to be virtuous for the virtue itself, I yield to the sentiment; but I doubt the ability of any of us to stand as well on that principle, as we can, aided by the approving smiles of our neighbors and friends. What child would strive, day after day, to please a parent who had announced to him, in language not to be mistaken, that nothing he could do would please him? yet this is the position that the religious community have occupied towards the whole class of actors for centuries. Give them encouragement to be good and virtuous citizens, and then, if they are not so, there will, at least, be justice in denouncing them. Now, there is no justice in it. It is certainly worth the trial.

Then there is our dramatic literature. If

there are not plays enough, already, that are pure, chaste, and elevating, then prune them till they are so. But what is better still, let the public sentiment demand plays of a high order, strongly imbued with a moral and religious sentiment, and rely upon it they will be produced.

Another very objectionable feature in our theatrical entertainments is, that they are too much prolonged. They are not only in that way made wearisome, but they are thus made to interfere, very seriously, with other enjoyments of a social nature, and to infringe too much on the hours usually allotted to rest, to be popular as a general amusement. In many places, on the continent of Europe, their theatres and opera-houses always close early, generally before nine o'clock, so that their entertainments do not seriously interfere with the more social diversions of the family and the drawing-room.

There can be no question but that theatres, conducted on the principles that have been sketched, would not only be well sustained, but lastingly useful, in furnishing an innocent, elevating, and improving amusement. If they could be brought within the means

of all classes, by making the admission fee very light, it cannot be doubted but that they would aid, very essentially, in depopulating the bar-rooms, and other haunts of vice and dissipation. It is only by such means that those reforms can be effected. The idea that men resort to the bar-room and the gaming-table because drinking and gambling have, in themselves, any peculiar attractions for the human mind, is entirely a mistaken one. Men are attracted there by a great law of nature, that has implanted in them an uncontrollable desire to be always employed in some way, and to have their minds always filled. They contract those habits in those listless hours of theirs when they feel impelled to seek some occupation for the mind ; and, casting around them, they find, perhaps, that those sources of occupation and enjoyment are, at those hours, alone open to *them*. What is wanted, in the case of the dissipated, is to fill their minds with new thoughts ; interest them with new objects of pursuit ; fill up their hours with new duties and new pleasures. The current of the mind flows on more steadily than any of those crystal currents, that, gathering far away in the moun-

tains, seek, so quietly, yet so steadily, the ocean. Like those latter, the currents of the mind, may, without a murmur, be diverted from their accustomed channels, and be made to flow smoothly on in other and deeper ones, while every attempt to impede their progress, in any one direction, by dams and obstructions, would be like attempting to stop the flow of the Mississippi, by closing up its outlet. If you give a nation a holiday, you must give it some profitable way to spend it; if you give to men leisure hours, you must provide a suitable occupation for those hours. If you ask men to give up this and that mode of spending their leisure hours, you must provide them with another mode equally accessible to them. The theatre, in that way, may be made a very efficient aid in drying up many of those impure fountains that are, in a measure, peculiar to large cities, as well as in cutting off the supplies to the receptacles of vice generally. But it must be by theatres patronized, conducted, governed, and controlled, by the moral and religious part of the community, and designed for, and brought within, the

means of the humblest classes. Some of the continental governments aid their theatres, so that they may be able to present the highest efforts of the dramatic art to the people at a price within their reach ; and who can tell how much influence that one thing may have exerted in keeping those people, who are thus provided with a pleasant place of resort, the temperate people that they are !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING USE OF SYSTEM
IN THE PURSUIT OF AMUSEMENTS.

THERE is no truth more self-evident than that conveyed in the old proverb, that “whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well;” and it is certain that to do any thing well, it must be done upon system. I have had occasion to allude to the importance of this feature in our social economy before, but it cannot be pressed too often upon the public mind. System, system, system, is the great law of progress. If amusements are worth having at all, they are worth having upon system. Yet how deficient are we in that particular! And still the young are indebted almost entirely to amusements for their *social* cultivation and *physical* training. Those two great features in the education and improvement of the rising generation must be obtained, in a great measure, in that way, or not at all. Those who believe that those two things have but little to do in

elevating mankind, I submit, labor under a serious error. The great agencies in the cultivation of man are *mental, moral, religious, social, and physical* culture. To make a perfect man, to make a perfect state of society, to make a perfect race, all of those agencies of usefulness must be employed. In order to employ them all, there must be system made use of in relation to the employment of *each* of them. Nations emerge from barbarism just in proportion as the parents in these nations fulfil their whole duty to their children in those particulars.

Every stage in the civilization and improvement of our race is marked by an extension of the acknowledged sphere of the duty of parents to their children, from the savage, who rears his children, acknowledging scarcely any other duty towards them than that of providing for their animal wants, to the parent in civilized society, who adds to it mental, moral, and religious instruction. It will be found, in almost every instance, that the standard of national character is in exact proportion to the standard of acknowledged parental obligation. The Popish system of religion looks only to the education

and development of the religious nature of man; while the Protestant has gone farther, and embraced, not only that, but his mental and moral instruction. The system of the ancient Grecians went one step farther than the Protestant, and added good physical training. Do we not see, in the history of the people educated under those different systems, striking evidence of the truth of what has been said? Notwithstanding that the ancient Grecians were without the light of the pure precepts of the gospel, and were burdened with an idolatrous system of religion, yet is it not undeniable that they, at one time, in some particulars, were as far in advance of the most cultivated of those nations of the present day which have shaken off the Popish yoke, as the latter are in advance of those nations which still tamely submit to it? Is it not evident that the sphere of parental duty may be still farther extended to advantage, so as to embrace **SOCIAL** instruction?

Every faculty that we possess is capable of almost endless cultivation and improvement. The faculties of the mind may be so cultivated and improved as to acquire a

giant power ; and so may the faculties of the body. Our moral and religious natures may be so improved by cultivation, as to present us, in some faint degree, in the image of our Maker. But our social affections are quite as susceptible of improvement as our moral. I will not say that the social and physical education, cultivation, and improvement of the rising generation, in this country, is entirely disregarded ; but this I can say, very safely, — that there is no *systematic* provision for it. We have our schools ; those are for *intellectual* culture. We have our churches and Sabbath schools ; those are for *religious* culture. Where is there any direct provision for the *social* culture and *physical* training of the young ? What community makes any provision for those two great objects ? What family adopts any system with regard to them ? What public, or even private, provision is there made for either of them, that approaches, in any degree, to the systematic provision that is made for those first-mentioned objects ? And yet is not system as much required in our social and physical training, as in our mental and religious ? Of what account is it to have a giant mind, if

the state of our bodily health will not admit of its vigorous employment? If it be the fate of genius, too often, to be laid in an early grave, is it not because the proper physical training and cultivation does not generally accompany the intellectual. The mind becomes too active for the body; "the sword is too sharp for the scabbard." So, of what avail to the world is the best religious instruction, unless the recipient has both the will and the ability, through good social and physical training, to make that religious instruction felt by the world?

I propose to consider, in a subsequent chapter, the propriety and importance of public provision for the social cultivation and the physical training of the people. My object here will be to present the subject of systematic family amusements to parents, as a duty they owe both to themselves and their children. How seldom it is that we find parents, in this country, providing for the social amusement of their children upon any settled principle or plan. Social cultivation, and physical training and improvement, are, in most instances, left entirely to chance. If parents interfere at all, in re-

tion to those things, it is generally to object and dissuade. The great object, with parents, should be to make home the happiest place for their children. To that end, how important is it that the family circle should be enlivened with innocent, cheerful, and agreeable amusements ! Unless home is made the happiest place, how can parents expect to retain their children around them, and under their influence, unseduced by the temptations without ? Children must and will have amusements ; and if they do not find them at home, they will be quite sure to seek them elsewhere. A countless number of youth are ruined in that way. No provision has been made for their enjoyment at home ; games and amusements have been interdicted, perhaps ; their petition to entertain their young friends has been rejected, and the natural consequence follows. Home is deserted to seek those enjoyments that ought there to have been supplied, at the public hall, or, perhaps, in more objectionable places, surrounded by the allurements of dissipation.

So, too, how seldom it is that parents interest themselves as much as they ought in

providing suitable social companions for their children. By neglecting to provide amusements for them, the neglect of this great duty naturally follows. The youth of both sexes will form friendships, — will have their social companions. That tendency of the youthful mind is one of its most striking and interesting features. It is designed for their highest good. It is capable, however, of being deeply instrumental of evil. A parent has only to leave his child to select his own companions at hazard, and, at that thoughtless age, the child stands hardly an even chance of making a selection that is not injurious, if not ruinous.

It is not so in many other countries, and ought not to be so any where. Parents should select and plan the amusements of their children, and preside over them. They should very early provide them with suitable social companions. The art of living, in both of those respects, is understood far better on the Continent of Europe than among us. There, in most cases, every thing is arranged with more or less reference to social enjoyment. They build their houses, and lay out their grounds, with the same refer-

ence to their social as they do to their other wants. The peasantry, in many portions of the country, instead of building their houses on their tillage grounds, as our farmers do, build in little groups or clusters, and go one, two, or three miles, to cultivate their fields. They do this, in part, to enjoy each other's society. No doubt they find other advantages resulting from it; but this is one of the chief inducements. Their evenings are passed together on the village green, or other chosen resort, where the aged either mingle in or preside over the sports of the younger part of the assembly. The climate on the Continent, perhaps, is more favorable to the social intercourse of the poor, than in many parts of our own country, as it allows of their meeting in the open air. But it is an old saying that "where there is a will there is a way;" and let our people be once brought to believe that it is for their true interest to provide, systematically, for social amusements, and our climate would afford no permanent obstacle to the realization of the enjoyment.

One of our countrymen, who, some years since, travelled through Germany, was so charmed with the merry and social manner

in which the peasantry of that country passed their evenings, that he was almost tempted to doubt the superior excellence of our republican over their aristocratic form of government. He seemed to question whether their apparently more social and joyous dispositions than those of our population, might not spring, legitimately, from the absence of all political care. The cause, however, of such apparent high appreciation of social enjoyments, on the Continent, probably arises from a deeper seated cause than that of politics. They, doubtless, look upon amusements in a different light from what the Anglo-Saxon races do. A distinguishing feature in the amusements of the peasantry, on the Continent, is, that they are generally enjoyed in common, without distinction of age or sex.

In some of the Swiss cantons, and in many parts of Germany, an admirable system exists, in relation to providing social acquaintances for the young, of both sexes, which is worthy of general imitation. Parents there make it a rule to provide a circle of acquaintances for their children at an early age, suited to their station in life ; and

the children meet, at stated periods, at the houses of the several members of the circle, with or without their parents, as the latter may see fit, for the purpose of mutual enjoyment. In this way, the parents secure to themselves the selection of their children's social companions, as well as the control of their amusements. In these circles, the parents of the children plan their amusements as they do their studies, and oversee them in the same manner, and in that way make those diversions bear a very important part in their education.

As a general rule, we should seek our social enjoyments among our own friends and kindred. This is the natural source from which to expect it. But little real enjoyment can be expected from those who are strangers to our feelings, hopes, purposes, and desires, and who consequently have no sympathies in common with us. Such intercourse must always be cold, constrained, and heartless. Though each may possess the best qualities of the heart, yet without some feelings or interests in common, little genuine enjoyment can be expected. The highest enjoyment must always flow from the

society of those whom we know, esteem, and love, and the pleasures of social intercourse will always diminish as we recede from each other in those respects.

It should be the policy of every family to provide for themselves a circle of friends, to which they may look for stated social enjoyments. That cannot be done without a due appreciation of the importance of such things, and concert of action among neighbors, friends, and kindred, to effect it. Such social arrangements as have been alluded to, could, with little trouble and expense, be adopted here, with such modifications as our different circumstances seem to require. There are very few families, in any community, whose circle of friends is not wide enough to admit of the formation of such a social arrangement as would be desirable to carry out such a system of enjoyments. The only difference between them and the sociables in general vogue among us, would be, that the circle would be more circumscribed; and it would, also, instead of embracing the younger classes only, be a union of families for the general enjoyment of all, without distinction of age. The time and place of

meeting, and the mode of enjoyment to be pursued, would all be the subject of arrangement, from time to time, as the convenience and happiness of those interested would seem to require. The advantages of this system are so numerous, that it seems impossible that they should not strike every mind at the first glance. It secures to parents the selection of their children's companions, and the supervision of their amusements — two as important features in their management and education as can be named. More young persons have been ruined by unfortunate or improper selection of companions, perhaps, than from all other causes combined. And these unhappy friendships have sprung up, in most instances, not because the victims to them had any natural affinity to vice, but because they were naturally of social dispositions, and, as their parents had never made use of any endeavors to provide them with social acquaintances, they were driven, as it were by necessity, to take up with such companions as chance afforded. Really desirable acquaintances the young can seldom command at once, without assistance from

their friends, while those who are undesirable too frequently come unbidden.

Our large cities swarm with young persons, of both sexes, from the country, who are either sent there, or suffered to go there, by their parents, without any previous provision for their social wants. All that is left to chance. If the young stranger is fortunate, and contracts desirable friendships, it is very well ; but, if it is otherwise, he is ruined ! To what a risk those parents are subjecting both themselves and their child ! If he is ruined, who must bear the blame ? Not, surely, the young man, unexperienced and credulous, who feels impelled by nature to seek society and companionship, while those who should have been his guardians in that particular have left him as much at the mercy of chance as if he was playing the game of life with the archfiend himself.

What those parents ought to have done, before they allowed their child to take up his residence in that city, was to secure for him, by some means, an introduction to a circle of friends, on whom reliance could be placed, where he might seek for, and find, that social

companionship of which every one feels so much the necessity. It would be very seldom that a youth, thus provided with the means of social intercourse, would fall below the level of the circle in which his friends had placed him. Without such an influence upon a young man, in a strange city, where vice so much abounds, the parent has no reason to expect any other result than that his child will be ruined ; and if he is ruined, the parent alone is in fault.

Under a well-regulated system of daily fireside amusements, might we not look for a more contented, cheerful, and happy population, than we now possess — more cultivated in their manners, more temperate in their habits, more attached to their homes, their kindred, and their country ; more social in their feelings, more joyous in their dispositions, more alive to grateful and devotional sentiments ; better formed, better developed, healthier, happier, and better ? If, under such a system, it only served to prevent the young from spending their evenings abroad, away from parental influence, as they now too often do, liable to all the casualties of ill-

formed friendships, and along with them mischievous habits, it should be enough to commend it to every parent's serious consideration. But when we consider that health, happiness, morals, taste, refinement, all depend, in a great measure, upon system, order, plan, and regularity, in the employment of our leisure hours, it cannot fail to interest us in so worthy an object.

CHAPTER XIV.

TREATS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING
AMUSEMENTS FREQUENT, AND WITHOUT PA-
RADE OR EXPENSE.

THERE are two objections that are often urged against amusements, and with a good deal of force. It is said that they are apt to be pursued at unseasonable hours, and that they lead to irregular and expensive habits. Under our present system of enjoying amusements, they are subject to both of those objections. But those faults arise from the false light in which amusements are viewed, and the wrong mode of enjoying them. Where amusements are looked upon as a part of every day's enjoyment, just as sleep, labor, food, and devotion, are, there is no difficulty in that respect. In those countries where the twilight of the evening is considered just as much set apart for recreation and social enjoyment as the other parts of the day are for those other duties that have been named, they seldom degenerate into scenes

of dissipation or extravagance. And there is no more reason to expect it than that a man who labors, and sleeps, and worships every day, should over-indulge himself in those particulars. But our opportunities for social enjoyment are so seldom, that the temptation to prolong them to a late hour is not to be wondered at. The very fact that we do so prolong them, under our system, shows that we crave more amusements than we get; and hence sleep, and rest, and, perhaps, parental favor, are often sacrificed to secure as much as possible of them while they are within our reach. That only shows that the appetite for amusement is like the natural appetite; if it is denied its reasonable gratification at one time, it will gorge itself to repletion at another, when opportunity offers.

The present system of popular amusements is one that is designed to crowd the enjoyments that properly should be distributed through weeks and months, into a single day or evening. In many, if not in most of our quiet New England villages, the prejudice of the religious portion of the inhabitants is so great against dancing, that it is seldom

or never tolerated at private parties or in the family circle. The inextinguishable love of that amusement is generally so great among the young folks of those places, that it usually finds vent, during the season, in two or three public balls. As the period for one of those assemblies approaches, the little village is thrown into an unusual state of excitement. The young men hold nightly caucuses, for weeks together, to determine upon and settle all the preliminaries of the great event. While this miniature parliament is holding its nightly sessions, and burdened with internal dissensions about the best mode of overcoming the scruples of numerous stern parents, who object to letting their daughters participate in such amusements, and while they are canvassing for managers, the female portion of the village are in a perfect fever of excitement. All are on tiptoe to know who are going, and what the minister and the deacon have determined to do about letting their children go, if any one should be so daring as to invite them. Many of those parents who would as soon think of turning their own house into a cock-pit, as to allow any dancing in it, are half

crazy with excitement, and are inquiring of every one they meet as to the propriety of letting their children attend, while they are determined to let them go at all events, and then throw the responsibility of it upon their children. Even the deacon's daughter, and sometimes the minister's, can be drawn out, on such occasions, by the village lawyer, or doctor, or by some young stranger. Weeks and weeks are spent in thus exciting the whole village, before the parents of many of the young persons can be induced to consent to let them participate in the amusement. At length the labors of the young people are crowned with success ; the parents' consent has been granted "for this once," and their enjoyments have commenced. Now, what can those parents expect of young persons, who have got together for enjoyment, after so much labor, toil, and trouble ? Do they expect that they will dance an hour or two, in a quiet, healthy manner, and then severally retire to their homes satisfied ? No ! they cannot expect any such thing if they have *any* knowledge of human nature. For parents to talk of an amusement being continued to an unreasonable hour, where it is got

up under such circumstances, is preposterous. They have no right to expect any thing else than that each one will endeavor to secure all of the enjoyment that he can from the diversion *while he can*. You might as well expect a thirsty traveller, in a desert, to drink sparingly, when he is not only incited by previous abstinence, but by fears of scarcity for the future. They come home worn out with excessive indulgence, and the next day, perhaps, they are feverish and stupid, and their parents, forthwith, denounce dancing; but there is no more reason in doing it, than for them to denounce food, if they should keep the same persons hungry for weeks and months, and then send them off, alone, to a well-loaded table, to indulge without check or hinderance, and should afterwards find them sick with over-indulgence. In both cases, there is an effort of Nature to restore herself to her natural state, and claim her own.

Now, suppose the parents of those young people had looked upon dancing as an amusement that was well enough, if pursued at proper hours, and in a proper manner, and had taken a rational view of it. They would

have seen that their children would have the amusement in some manner, and, instead of undertaking, under such circumstances, to oppose dancing, or to remain even neutral as to it, they would have gratified their taste for it by allowing them, at least, occasionally to indulge in it an hour or two; and for that purpose they would have opened their own houses. Is there any reason to suppose, that, under such a state of things, there would be any disposition to get up assemblies, and to prolong them to unreasonable hours?

This objection to amusements on account of its leading the young into habits of over-indulgence and dissipation would vanish immediately, if they were furnished regularly, and pursued in common, without distinction of age or sex. The appetite for them would never be left to hanker for them inordinately, and there would always be such an influence within the circle of the amusement as to preclude all dissipation.

Our natural worldly wisdom seems to forsake us in our amusements. In most other matters, we enjoy, and seem to deserve, the reputation of knowing, pretty well, how to "turn a penny," and get the greatest good

from it ; but, in relation to our social enjoyments, I suspect few civilized people spend so much as we do for so small returns. The sums that are expended with us for an "annual party," or a village ball, would, in France or Germany, defray the social expenses of a circle of friends for a year.

The reasons for this may, perhaps, lie deeper than mere want of economy, or false estimates of the value and importance of amusements, and in many cases I have no doubt that it does. Pride and ambition, no doubt, modify and control our amusements in a great degree.

If our social condition was more fixed, there would, very likely, be less temptation to display. If there were no other ends to be answered by expensive parties than mere enjoyment, less expensive ones would probably be given. It is, no doubt, thought very politic, in many cases, for a family to husband the resources that they can naturally spare for social enjoyments, to be all lavished upon a splendid party, just as some pious Romanists observe Lent most devoutly and strictly, to make up for their free indulgence during Carnival. By means of such parties,

a family may often, perhaps, gain another rung upon the ladder of fashionable society ; they may, perhaps, by the brilliancy of their arrangements, attract a few of the “fashion” into their circle, as the moth is attracted by the glare of the candle. But it is seldom that any of those collateral objects, even if attained, compensate for the social joys sacrificed for them. The history of fashionable and ambitious families has been so often portrayed, and we have all so often witnessed the results of sacrifices to the shrine of fashionable life, that few can be strangers to its delusions.

Where social enjoyment alone is the object, very little expense, in the way of providing refreshments, is needed. Indeed, I very much doubt whether, in most cases, any refreshments, beyond those of the most simple kind, are calculated, in general, to enhance the enjoyments of the evening. It is very certain that those who entertain others the least, attach the most importance to that portion of their entertainment, while those whose houses are always open to their friends, attach little or no importance to it ; and it is

reasonable to suppose that experience has taught them that really it has little to do in the way of aiding in social enjoyments. I think it will be found that, in the most elevated society, the least parade of that kind is made. At least, it is so in Paris, in many of the most polished and intellectual circles ; and instances could be named, in our own country, of the most elevated families entertaining, at stated periods, most of the distinguished of our own countrymen, and of foreign visitors, without any of the expense and parade that distinguish such assemblies in the middling walks of life. And this is done, by those who could, if they chose, afford rich entertainments ; but they have learned the importance of not only having our social enjoyments daily, but to have them without those burdens that make them a curse rather than a blessing.

It is said that “three removals” are equal to one “burn out ;” and the terrors of what are called “cleaning” and “whitewashing-days” have been both said and sung ; but a modern annual party is all four of those evils rolled into one. The note of preparation, in

the family, is to be heard for weeks and weeks before the great event, and evidences of the devastation attending it are discernible for weeks afterwards, and all to astonish their neighbors. Let the principle be once acknowledged that amusements are as much a part of our daily life as sleep or devotion, and that it demands and ought to receive a place in our daily thoughts, and daily arrangements, and all these expensive parties will give way, to make room for a more regular system of amusements ; and instead of lavishing upon one party their whole means, it will be distributed through a score of entertainments, not, perhaps, so brilliant, but far more productive of improvement, as well as of enjoyment.

If daily amusements were esteemed necessary for the health and happiness of all classes, a change would be wrought in the mode of enjoying them in this particular immediately. What is now lavished upon one single entertainment would be distributed through the year, in a score or more of less expensive ones. The reason why we do not now have as many enjoyments as some less

favored nations, is to be traced to the different estimate we place upon them. When we learn to seek society for the pleasures of the social intercourse it affords, then such enjoyments will be afforded more frequently and at less expense.

CHAPTER XV.

**TREATS OF THE NECESSITY OF PROVIDING
PUBLIC PLACES FOR THE PURSUIT OF IN-
NOCENT, GRATIFYING, AND USEFUL AMUSE-
MENTS.**

IN this young and growing country, it is of vast importance that we early adopt correct views with regard to the bearing of amusements upon our social institutions, and upon the future prosperity and happiness of our country generally. Now is the time, if ever, for us to take the right stand with regard to them. We have no diversions, as yet, that have obtained any controlling influence over the public mind. Every thing that relates to our relaxations is immature, neither fortified by any hoary-headed customs, nor endeared to us by any very tender associations. The amusements that we now possess we can now surrender, better than at a later day, if they ought to be given up; and if they are to be modified, or changed, it can now be done with less violence to our preposses-

sions and prejudices, than years or centuries hence, when our habits have become fixed. By-and-by we shall have become attached to certain modes of enjoyment, and it will require a great moral revolution to change the current of our pleasures. If amusements, recreations, and diversions, are useless and pernicious, now is the time to make a manly stand against them, in every shape that they may assume, just as we do against intemperance, or any other vice. Let us have no halting, lackadaisical opposition, but one that shall show that we are in earnest.

But if, on the other hand, relaxations and amusements are something that we require, just as we do food and sleep,—if they are something that man has always had, and always will have, of some kind,—then it behooves us to see to them and regulate them. If they exert a commanding influence upon our manners, habits, and civilization,—if they exercise a controlling influence over all of our social relations, and penetrate even to the stability of our government,—let us see to it that they are of such a nature as to mould our characters aright, and educate us to be as social, moral, and temperate, as we are free,

enterprising, and intelligent. If there is a choice in amusements, let us select them with care ; let us supplant pernicious ones by bringing forward and fostering good ones.

If there is virtue in bringing the people together in public malls, parks, and promenades, how important is it that the thousands of villages, towns, and cities, that are springing into existence all over our country, should provide early for their social wants in those respects ! Land now is comparatively cheap, and space may now be left, in all of them, for such purposes, with but little cost or inconvenience ; and the earlier we commence to beautify and adorn such places, the sooner shall we and succeeding generations reap the reward of those labors.

There has, undoubtedly, been a gradual liberalizing of the sentiments of the people of this country with respect to some classes of amusements ; there is less prejudice now than formerly against dancing, in private families, and, also, against theatrical representations, when properly conducted ; but those sentiments are much more felt than expressed. There is now, probably, no very serious obstacle to prevent us from remodel-

ling our whole social system, with regard to amusement. It is getting every where to be understood that the monster vice, that now afflicts our nation, cannot be put down by a strong hand, but must be supplanted. The dram-shop must be outbid by the community. Better, happier places of resort must be furnished for the young, the thoughtless, the loitering, and the devotee of pleasure, than the saloons of dissipation.

The natural and inevitable results of our false views in relation to amusements, and false action in consequence of those views, are too palpable to be mistaken. Any one at all acquainted with mankind might predict, with certainty, that the same causes would produce the same effects, in kind, if not in degree, every where. Banish amusements, in a measure, from the family circle, — provide no public places of resort for the innocent recreation of the young and gay, for those whose homes are uncomfortable, stupid, or indifferent, and for those who have no means of access to private circles, and surround them with bar-rooms, billiard-rooms, saloons, and other kindred “institutions,” with open doors, inviting all, without distinction, to enter and partake

of the social and sensual indulgence,—and what is to prevent them from there seeking shelter and companionship? Persons thus situated may arm themselves against the temptations of such places with resolutions deep and strong ; but unless some other and better places of resort, in the providence of God, are brought within their reach, they will enter, partake, and be ruined. The Maelstrom that has once brought the ship within the circuit of its influence, is not more sure of its prey, than are those places, of the young loiterer in the street, with no means of access to better and higher sources of amusement. Such a person once there from any cause, the more noble-hearted and generous he is, the more sure to fall. He finds himself enjoying the comforts of social companionship, and feels that it is due to the proprietor that he should patronize his bar, or his billiard-table, to reward him for his hospitality ; and he does it, and thus paves the way to his speedy ruin.

Under a government like our own, where a portion of her wealth and her honors is not above the reasonable aspiration of the humblest boy in the street, it is not too much

to expect of every one, who is not already debased, that he will, where a choice of amusements is set before him, almost invariably choose those that are the most elevating and improving, where they are all equally free to him. But, however aspiring the man or youth may be, if you leave him no choice but the bar-room, or some other haunt of dissipation, ten chances to one that he, unwillingly and timidly, is borne, by the silent but ever-active current of his social desires, into one and another of those whirlpools of vice, until he has no power of escape from their destroying tide.

Sooner or later, provision will have to be made, in all of our northern cities and considerable towns, for places of public resort and recreation, where all may freely meet, without distinction of age, sex, or condition. Such means of bringing our people together is needed to preserve us united in feeling, and to keep our social institutions as liberal as our political. Still more are they needed to minister to our happiness, and to aid in our social and moral education. Our climate admits of our pursuing our amusement in the open air but a few months in the year; for

the rest of the year, our parks and our promenades lie desolate and deserted; but the social wants of the people remain the same, and seek the same gratification. A very large part of the population have not the conveniences nor the means to entertain guests at their own firesides; and that is almost equivalent to saying that they can never expect to be entertained at the firesides of others,—so reciprocal is hospitality. To meet the wants of those classes, there are needed public places of general resort, where the poor man and his family may go, after the toils of the day, and enjoy a little of the sunshine of life. How such institutions shall be provided and maintained, and precisely what shall be their character, must depend on a great many considerations; but that some such provision has got to be made for the social wants of the people, before dram-shops, bar-rooms, and saloons, become "obsolete," seems to me undoubted. The vacant hours that are now appropriated to such places must be filled up in some such manner as that, before we can expect to do anything more than check the vice of intemperance.

The sources of amusement that such places might afford are, in some respects, more limited than those afforded by the public walks and gardens of warmer and sunnier climes ; but in some other respects they might be made superior to them. To be sure, the evening air, the bright canopy of heaven, and the rural scenery of the park or the garden, with all their refreshing and inspiring influences, would be wanting. And perhaps those places would not admit of so much vivacity, mirth, and social glee and merriment, as under nature's roof ; but, perhaps, what would be lost in one way might be gained in another. While they would afford the same, and, perhaps, better opportunities for the exchange of civilities, and for agreeable and familiar intercourse among friends, than the public mall or the tea-garden, they might be made, at the same time, to minister highly to the instruction of the people. This might be accomplished in various ways. One way might be in making them the repositories for donations, and collections, of the beautiful, the curious, and the instructive, in all of the departments of the arts and sciences. New and curious in-

ventions might be there exposed, by their inventors, to public inspection and criticism, and thus bring them into notice ; and artists might there exhibit their works to the gratification and improvement of the people, and to their own advantage. A never-failing source of amusement would be for little circles of friends to meet there, by appointment, weekly or oftener, and there enjoy all of the delights of a social meeting, without the expense and formalities of a private entertainment. On the Continent of Europe, the higher classes are constantly in the habit of entertaining their friends in their opera-boxes, where they pass the evening, at cards, or in social conversation, occasionally bestowing a little attention to what is going on upon the stage ; and the poorer classes meet their friends at the cafés, tea-gardens, parks, and village-greens. The cafés and tea-gardens of the Italian and German states are almost always enlivened by music provided by private enterprise. In this case, music might be made to sustain an important part in rendering the resort entertaining and agreeable.

If it be inquired how such places of relax-

ation are to be provided, it may, very safely, be replied, that they cannot be procured and sustained, unless they are felt to be needed; when that feeling becomes general, then nothing will be easier than to provide and sustain them. The expense would not be one tenth part so great as is paid, in public and private charity, to support and reclaim the victims of dissipation, who were made so from the want of other sources of enjoyment. Hence, if such places were to be supported by taxation, it would not increase the burdens of the people, but only divert the present pauper fund to the support of institutions for its prevention, following the old adage, that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." But there are both wealth and benevolence enough, in most of our large places, to do much towards such improvements, when their necessity is once felt. In our most considerable cities there are museums, and libraries, and galleries of art, belonging to private corporations, or associations of individuals, that unquestionably could be easily procured to aid in a work of this kind, if the proprietors were to be once

convinced of its beneficial influence in staying intemperance, and the many other evils consequent upon it.

There are numbers of institutions in our principal cities that might be thrown open to the public without any serious detriment to the proprietors, while the advantages that would accrue to the public from such a course would be incalculable. Let us suppose, for the purpose of illustration, that the Boston Athenæum, with its extensive library and gallery of art, should be dedicated to the public ; that the rooms of the Historical and Natural History Societies should be free to citizens and strangers, something on the plan of the public libraries in Paris ; that the Lowell fund should sustain a regular daily course of free public lectures ; and that, in addition to those places, Boston should have one or more places of free public resort, enlivened with music, and stored with the beautiful and curious in art, for the public amusement of the people. Would not those facts alone, published to the world, invest that city with a charm to the student and man of leisure that it does not now possess ? Why is it that Paris is the centre of attrac-

tion for all Europe? She has obtained that enviable position by the liberal principles on which all of her public institutions of instruction and amusement are administered. The stranger, the moment he enters Paris, finds himself welcomed to her galleries of art, her libraries, her lecture-rooms, and gardens. How gratifying those public marks of welcome are to the traveller, no one, perhaps, can fully appreciate until he has experienced them. It is easy to conceive, however, that Paris owes more to that feature in her institutions, for the preference that is given to her by travellers, for a resting-place, than to any one other thing.

The associations that have been formed, in most of our large cities, within a few years, for the benefit of the clerks and apprentices in mercantile and mechanical professions, are, undoubtedly, exerting a very salutary influence upon the young men engaged in those pursuits. Their library and lecture-rooms always give them an agreeable place of evening resort, and serve to bring them together, and give them an acquaintance with each other, calculated to be advantageous to them, both socially and in the prosecution of the

business of life. All such institutions as those that serve to fill up our leisure hours innocently and agreeably, certainly accomplish a great good; but where they go further, and employ those leisure hours in the cultivation of useful studies and in social intercourse, they are above all praise. They are one great step in the social reform in this country, whose tendency is to root out intemperance and its kindred vices. If each of those institutions could succeed in maintaining a course of lectures, pertaining, exclusively, to their own pursuits, from some lectures devoted to the subject, with all the "means and appliances," to illustrate them, a vast deal more improvement would result from them, than from the usual popular course of miscellaneous lectures. If, further, they could be placed on such a foundation as to be made accessible to every young clerk or apprentice free of charge, might they not be still further useful?

If the mechanics' apprentices could, every season, have a course of lectures upon architecture, and the mechanic arts generally, and the merchants' clerks have one upon commerce, manufactures, and those branches that are

naturally allied to their profession, would it not have a great influence in thoroughly indoctrinating them in the principles of their several professions ? In Paris, connected with the Royal College, there are courses of lectures on those and a great number of other branches of industry, free to strangers. The lecturers are professors of those branches, and their lecture-rooms are stored with every thing calculated to illustrate their subjects. For instance, in a lecture upon the coffee-trade, the lecturer would have before him samples of all of the different kinds of coffee known to the trade, and so of indigo, tobacco, cotton, and the like ; and in each case, the whole process of growing, curing, shipping, and every other step in the trade, until it reaches the hands of the consumer, would be commented on and illustrated.

Another class of public institutions, which would repay, in a thousand ways, the public outlay, are, athletic institutes for gymnastic exercises, for the separate uses of both sexes. Like the other institutions that I have named, they would afford an agreeable resort for pastime, especially for the young ; and let them be established in all of our towns and

cities, for the free use of the people, they would contribute more towards raising us up a healthy, brave, manly, and handsome race of men and women, than all of the "doctor's arts and opiates" this side of the moon. Money expended in raising up such a race of men would be better invested for the defence of our liberties, than in raising thousands of miles of fortifications, and building whole squadrons of steam-frigates, that might rival England's boasted wooden walls. The masculine exercises of the Greeks gave their artists living originals from which to copy those perfections of sculptured art that are the boast of their age; and they are indebted to that, and not to their superior genius, for what are called their beautiful "creations." I would give more for a thousand gymnasiums, in our land, well supported, for the purpose of bringing us back, one day, to the high perfection of ancient sculpture, than for the same number of schools of art, filled with the most gifted of our sons, with eyes in "fine frenzy rolling," but with no living models worthy of their chisels. Such institutions could be maintained at a

very slight expense, considering the advantages to be derived from them.

The only remaining public provision for the general and free enjoyment of the people, that I shall attempt to mention, (though there are numberless others that might be named,) is that for their enjoyment in the open air. There is nothing that adds so much to the charm of a town, as well laid out and handsomely ornamented public grounds. It raises the reputation of the people, in the eyes of the traveller, at once, and very justly too ; for it is to be doubted whether an instance can be found of a people exhibiting taste in that particular, without its coloring their whole history, more or less ; or with such appliances for social intercourse and improvement, without elevating them, and attaching them strongly to their homes and firesides. They are worth laying out and ornamenting, for the reputation of the place ; for its ornament ; for the shade and comfort they afford ; for places of delightful recreation ; for the health of the people ; and for the aid they afford in carrying forward social improvements. For each one of those purposes, they repay, tenfold, the expense

bestowed upon them. Happy will it be for the inhabitants of our young and growing towns, all through the country, if they seasonably turn their attention to those ornamental and useful public improvements.

The moral, social, and religious advancement of the people of this country, for the next half century, depends more upon the principles that are adopted with regard to amusements generally, and how those principles are carried out, than to a great many other things of apparently greater moment. If we look upon all of our natural endowments as bestowed for our innocent use, delight, and gratification, and that every pleasure is to be tested by its innocence, when *rightly* conducted, and not when it is *perverted*, just as we judge of medicines, money, and every thing else, then we shall all have something to do in giving tone to them. We shall then see to it, that we have enough healthy sources of recreation to empty the gambling-rooms, the tippling-shops, and the brothels ; and we shall see to it, too, that our amusements are not only healthy now, but that they are *kept so*. Societies then will be formed for promoting, regulating, and system-

atizing social enjoyments, just as they now exist for furnishing us with intellectual amusements. When it is not thought beneath the dignity of the wise, the prudent, and the good, to interest themselves in such things, then our social systems will be made far more perfect than they are at present, or ever have been, and a new era will dawn upon us. When our amusements, as our more serious pursuits and duties, become regular, methodical, and daily, and are subject always to the same great tests that our other acts have to encounter, and no other, then we may expect to see a more virtuous, temperate, and social people than we have yet beheld.

CHAPTER XVI.

TREATS OF THE PROPRIETY OF FURTHER EX-
TENDING OUR HOLIDAY CALENDAR.

ONE of the striking features in our social economy is the very limited number of our holidays. I question whether another country can be found that has so few. Indeed, our national birthday is the only holiday that we can really claim as a national one. All our other holidays are local. The New England, and some few of the other states, observe, annually, a day for public fasting, and another for public thanksgiving. In the Middle and Southern States, and among the Catholic and Episcopalian population, Christmas is very generally observed. In New York, the first day of the year is observed as a holiday. In other parts of the country, there are feeble demonstrations towards celebrating other days as holidays, but with very little success. For instance, in Boston the artillery election day, and commencement day at Harvard College, are *quasi* holidays.

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After making the most liberal allowances for local holidays, still the number that we enjoy appears very limited when we compare it with the number enjoyed by the ancient Jewish, Grecian, and Roman nations, or even by any of the modern Christian nations of Europe. It is doubtless true, that in most countries the people enjoy more than five times the number of holidays that we do, and in the case of many of them, they have more than ten to our one. It may be answered, perhaps, that they observe too many holidays; and in some cases that may be true. The propriety of setting apart such days has been already discussed. The custom is of divine origin; it is suited to the nature of man, and has been found serviceable to him in all ages of the world. There are the same reasons to be urged in favor of holidays, commemorative of certain events that we deem worthy of undying remembrance, that there is for appropriating certain hours to certain specific duties—a custom which no well-ordered mind ever disregards. It is through such a system, in the institution of the Sabbath, that the great Author and Benefactor of our race seeks to secure and

perpetuate our grateful remembrance. It is through such a system, in the institution of the passover and other holydays, that He sought to perpetuate in the Jewish mind the remembrance of his great and signal mercies to them. It is through such a system that man, in all ages, has instinctively sought to perpetuate great and memorable events. Those modern reformers and wiseacres who cry out against the observance of one day in seven as holy, and profess to regard every day as a Sabbath, have yet the first lesson to learn in mental philosophy. I wonder if they have any set hours for their meals, or for sleep, or for labor; or for recreation ; or are all times alike to them for those purposes ? A man under such a system might be expected to accomplish about as much in the world as if he appropriated the members of his body to no set duty, but used his hands and feet indiscriminately for the purposes of walking, handling, running, writing, and the like.

It has been well said, in relation to holidays, that "their accordance with the wants of man's nature is evident, from the fact that we cannot do every thing at all times, and are therefore obliged to assign different

portions of our time to different employments. We cannot give ourselves up every moment to the recollection of the freedom of our country, to rejoicing on account of the birth of Christ, or to thankfulness to God for his creating and preserving care. It is expedient, then, to set apart certain days, in which we may live exclusively for each of those subjects of contemplation."

To break up that eternal round of labor, labor, labor, by old and young, by rich and poor, as though an invisible power impelled them to it, we need stated holidays, when all are expected to lay aside their usual avocations, and join in some general rejoicings. The strong arm of public opinion is wanted, now and then, to palsy, for a time, the hands of our industrious population. Without such an influence, it is impossible to make a large part of the business community feel that they can spare any time for recreation. They are indissolubly geared to the great central wheel of business, and as long as that turns, they work. If you would stop them, you must stop that. Without something of the kind, we shall soon realize, in our own persons, the long-looked-for *desideratum* in industrial mech-

anism,—the perpetual motion. Even now the great majority of business men are never more bewildered than they are with a leisure day upon their hands. They know no more what to do with themselves on such occasions than the veteran French prisoner did when released from the Bastile. Like an aged pack-horse, they cannot stand without a load.

It is undoubtedly true that our Puritan fathers came here strongly prejudiced against holidays of all kinds. They had seen so many of those days of pastime perverted in their father-land, that they looked upon them with something more than distrust. They fell into the same error, with regard to holidays, that they did as to amusements generally. They found them capable of perversion, and hence discarded them altogether, not thinking that the same rule would cause them to discard their religion, since it was from the perversion of that that they were fleeing. Instead of reforming the amusements that had been handed down to them, as they did the mode of worship, they scarcely gave them any place in their social economy. They severed themselves, at a blow,

from all the delightful, social, and touching festivities of May-day, harvest-home, and merrie Christmas. That they were stern men is evidenced by their thus cutting loose from the tender associations of those holidays of their youth.

That they were right in so cutting loose from some of those holidays, if they were obliged to transplant them to this land of their adoption, root and branch, as they then existed in their mother country, no one, probably, would deny; but no such necessity existed. When they forswore Robin Hood, and Maid-Marian, and the maskings and mummings that had been impiously ingrafted on the parent stock of merrie Christmas, they had done enough, and it was childish in them to attempt to root up that choice old holiday itself, rather than to prune it of foreign shoots and poisonous grafts, especially when such a favorable opportunity was afforded them, to adopt such a celebration of the precious natal day of our Lord, as should be consistent with its most cherished associations.

There are several days that I hope soon to see celebrated throughout our land as holi-

days. I believe the time has now arrived when the people are ripe for such a movement. I think I have seen, of late years, a growing disposition on the part of the people throughout the country to engraft more holidays on our social institutions. It is certain that the people have learned a great lesson, within a few years, in the art of observing holidays. Formerly those days were made subservient to vice and intemperance. Now it is the reverse. Our national jubilee, now-a-days, is celebrated by all ages, and both sexes, together, instead of separately, as formerly, and it is converted, at once, into an engine of good. By means of temperance picnics and temperance celebrations, that cause seldom fails to experience favoring gales on that day of glorious memory. Other great interests are also subserved by it. Members of different classes, sects, and parties, are there brought together, and taught those lessons of charity and love that are only learned by contact.

The first day, in order of time, that I soon hope to see given up to social festivities throughout our country, is the first day of the year — new year's day. It is naturally

a holiday. It stands out as a milestone in our journey of life, that seems to stare upon us from the wayside, and admonish us how rapidly we are nearing our journey's end, and to call upon us to pause for a while in our onward career and greet our fellow-travellers.

It has always been made a season for more or less rejoicing the world over. We find traces of its observance, as a festival, among the Jews ; and it was celebrated with distinguished ceremonies by the ancient Romans, and also by the Germans, and even by the ancient Britons. It is worthy of remark that the custom among us of bestowing on our friends, on that day, tokens of remembrance, both in presents and in kind wishes, was one of the leading characteristics of its observance, as far back as history traces it. So universal has been the practice of giving and receiving presents on that day, that even crowned heads have participated with their subjects in it ; and it is even related of some of them, that they used it, in some cases, to replenish their exhausted treasuries. Elizabeth of England, it is said, made a great account of this holiday ; and it is hinted that

by that means she obtained many of those costly robes and jewels that she left at her decease, bestowed upon her by her courtiers and household, so indiscriminately that it is recorded that even the dustman, on one occasion, presented her with two bolts of cambric.

The Druids observed it with many mystic ceremonies, and so did many of the German tribes; but the latter also made it a day of social festivity, exchanging congratulations and presents.

The new year's day of the Christians, being the eighth day after Christmas, is the festival of Christ's circumcision; and the day at present is a holiday celebrated with religious services in Catholic countries.

Of modern nations, it is said, the French celebrate new year with the most spirit. It has been estimated that the amount expended upon *bon-bons* and sweetmeats, for presents, on new year's day, in the French capital, exceeds £20,000, while the sale of jewelry and fancy articles, in the first week of the year, is computed at one fourth of the sales during the whole twelve months. Probably less notice is taken of the day in England

and most parts of the United States, than in any other Christian countries.

The citizens of New York have an admirable custom connected with this holiday, worthy of general adoption ; and if that custom of theirs could be added to the other usual festivities common upon the Continent, it would add as much to the flavor of the day, as the generous hospitality in castle and hall did, in days of yore, to the merrie Christmas of Old England.

Their new year is a social gala-day, worthy of their honest and sturdy Dutch ancestors ; and if they have nothing else to remember them by, that festival should serve to embalm them in their memories. The day, with them, is given up entirely to complimentary visits by the gentlemen to their female friends. The latter are "at home," on that day, to all their friends, if not at any other time. The festivities are usually commenced early new year's morning, by the servants, who are allowed that time to make their complimentary calls, before the round of more fashionable calls begins ; and hence you may see, on that morning, that class of

persons hurrying from house to house, exchanging salutations, and brandishing and distributing their little presents among their friends. Early in the forenoon all the vehicles suited to the season are put in requisition. For weeks previous, the gentlemen have been preparing their list of acquaintances for that day's campaign, and no little pride is ordinarily felt in making it as formidable as possible. Every house is open, and every lady is in waiting to greet her acquaintances, and exchange with them the congratulations of the season, and extend to them the hospitalities of her house. Every thing is smiling and joyful, as they pass from house to house, and from friend to friend, greeting each other with mutual wishes of kindness, and bestowing on each other tokens of respect and love.

It is easy to see that such an anniversary must exert a happy influence upon the social character of the people that observe it. It is a day of jubilee sacred to friendship, as Thanksgiving and Christmas are to the ties of kindred. The principle on which both are founded is the same. The one is bounded by those ties that have been woven, thread

by thread, around the family hearth, while the other, pursuing the same object, takes a wider range, embracing all those to whom we have become attached, by the more feeble and brittle, but not less divine, cords of social and endearing friendship. As among the one, so among the other, there are causes always operating to sever those ties, and break those cords, and estrange hearts that claim each other's sympathy. These holidays, in both instances, remove, year by year, the little barriers that an unlucky word, a thoughtless look, a heedless omission of etiquette, had erected between them. Amid the general flush of joy, and overflow of kindness, and hospitality, that swells every bosom and enlarges every heart on that day, it must be a serious social offence that the most unforgiving disposition would not overlook and forget. It serves as a general day of amnesty for social offences, (a class of misdeeds punished oftentimes by our fair friends with no ordinary severity,) when the prison doors, for that day, are open to offenders. Then, if ever, is the time to brush the dust from a too long neglected card, to revive long lost acquaintanceships, and to kindle anew the expiring embers of

esteem and friendship. In this point of view, alone, such an anniversary is invaluable.

This mode of ushering in the new year is worthy of general adoption, and there seems now to be a disposition, in most of the large cities, to engraft the custom upon their social institutions. Happy will it be if the praiseworthy efforts of those enlisted in that undertaking shall be crowned with success.

For myself, I have always dwelt with delight upon the May-day recreations of our mother country, and regretted that our Puritan sires carried their disloyalty so far as to refuse allegiance to her majesty, the Queen of May. I never indulged much sorrow for their cavalierly treatment of Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, Maid-Marian, and those other scape-grace courtiers of her majesty; but there is a sweet sentiment that hangs around the ancient May-pole, decorated with flowers, and surrounded with the gay and smiling faces of frolicking children, that I cannot help thinking is natural to the human heart.

It is a period that has inspired many a poet, and been celebrated in many a ballad; and the rapture with which Spenser, Her-

rick, Chaucer, and their contemporary poets, dwell upon the merrie May-day diversions of their times, give us pretty clear ideas of the hold that that festival had then upon the hearts of the people. There is something in the very season of the year that seems to lend a charm to that rural festival. When all nature is awaking, as it were, from sleep, and bursting with life and beauty, our hearts are apt to expand also, and clothe themselves in higher, and purer, and more delightful aspirations. We feel then, more than ever, sensibility to the quiet beauties of Nature, and our hearts are then more than ever alive to the warm and enlivening emotions of youth. Then, if ever, we grow young again, and, as it were, take a new hold on life.

“On this day,” says Strutt, in his admirable book of Sports, “the juvenile part of both sexes were wont to rise early, and walk to some neighboring wood, accompanied with music, where they broke down branches from the trees, and adorned themselves with flowers. They then returned with their booty, homeward, about the rising of the sun, first having secured a tall pole, which

was erected on some common or green, in or near the village, and adorned with ribbons and flowers. They then set up summer halls and arbors hard by it, and gave themselves up to hilarity and amusements."

What Mr. Irving has so beautifully expressed as to the decline of this festival, in England, is equally applicable to our own country. "I cannot but regret," says he, "that this innocent and fanciful festival has fallen into disuse. It is appropriate to this verdant and pastoral country, and calculated to light up the too-pervading gravity of the nation. I value every custom that tends to infuse poetic feeling into the common people, and to sweeten and soften the rudeness of rustic manners without destroying their simplicity. Indeed, it is to the decline of this happy simplicity that the decline of this custom may be traced; and the rural dance on the green, and the homely May-day pageant, have gradually disappeared, in proportion as the peasantry have become expensive and artificial in their pleasures, and too knowing for simple enjoyment."

There has been evinced, of late, in many parts of our country, quite a disposition to

revive this ancient and rural holiday ; and I cannot help thinking that, with very little encouragement, the most delightful and social enjoyments of that hopeful period of the year may be restored to us, like precious heirlooms, that have been lost for a season, to their rightful family possessors. Almost every return of that season is now welcomed with more favor and spirit than its predecessor ; and it is to be hoped that we shall soon see it observed throughout our country as a national holiday.

But of all the old holidays there are none, to my mind, so dear in association, and so worthy of universal observance, as Christmas. It is commemorative of the greatest event recorded in the annals of the world. It appeals to the heart as no other holiday can. There is a pathos in all that relates to it equalled only by the momentous interests it affects, and the sublime hopes it inspires. Its advent was welcomed by celestial rejoicings such as the world never witnessed before. It is the birthday of man's dearest hopes, the era of his spiritual life. If there is any virtue in holidays to awaken and cherish the memory of precious events, then

the last festival to be surrendered should be the natal day of our Lord. Then, if ever, the heart that is rightly attuned will beat warmer and stronger, and feel a little of that glow of exultation, that awakened those shouts of joy that ushered in its divine original.

There is something very delightful in the old custom of adorning certain places on that occasion. When every thing is "sere and withered without," there is something very enlivening in witnessing the "chaste decorations of the holly and the ivy," tapestring the church, adorning old and familiar objects around the family hearth, and signalizing the faith and hopes that dwell within, at the window. They seem to invest those places, always so sacred, with new and peculiar sanctity and charms. The fire seems to burn brighter, and send forth a more genial heat, as we gather around it, 'mid such tokens of sacred rejoicing. The congratulations of kindred and friends, at that season, seem to be deeper and warmer, as if partaking, somewhat, of those feelings of "good-will to men," that were announced at the advent.

I have always cherished a warm attach-

ment to that old holiday of the heart, not a little heightened, perhaps, by the attractive character in which it was presented to my youthful mind by the pen of our distinguished countryman in the "Sketch-Book," and in "Bracebridge-hall." No one who has read his fascinating papers on that time-honored festival of our father-land, can fail to be inspired with a longing to see its claims once more acknowledged, and witness its universal observance.

Not the least beautiful and endearing arrangement of the Christmas festival, wherever celebrated, is the bountiful and generous hospitality and benevolence it always inspires. While nature is cold, and bleak, and inhospitable without, all is warmth and hospitality within. The circle around the family hearth is never wider nor happier than then, and the poor and needy are never less likely to be forgotten. Presents are then circulated from hand to hand, and the sound of hearty and joyous exultation resounds from castle to cottage. "Then, if ever," in the words of a quaint old writer, "capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese, and ducks, with beef and mutton, must all die, for in

twelve days a multitude of people cannot be fed with a little." Then "plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth." Then, "or never, must music be in tune; for the youth must dance and sing, to get them a heat, while the aged sit by the fire."

"Christmas eve was wont to be ushered in in olden times in a manner characteristic of the odd humors of the old festival. It was done by what was called the firing of the Yule clog — which was a great log of wood, sometimes the root of a tree, brought into the house with great ceremony on Christmas eve, laid in the fireplace, and lighted with the brand of last year's clog. While it lasted, the family and friends made themselves social around it in merry games, singing and telling of tales. The Yule clog was to burn all night: if it went out, it was a sign of ill-luck. The brand remaining from the Yule clog was put carefully away, to light the next year's Christmas fire."

The morning of this festival used to be ushered in by the Christmas carol — a song proclaiming good-will to men. It was then the custom of the English gentlemen and

nobility to feast their neighbors and tenantry, Christmas morning, at their own halls, by break of day. The characteristic dish at this feast was the *hicken* or boiled sausage. After that, the day was given up to holy devotions, and the evening to light-hearted, gay, social amusements.

The tambourine and the pipe resounded in the spacious hall. Then were the merry games of blindman's buff, hunt the slipper, questions and commands, crambo, cross-purposes, jests and riddles, singing and dancing, resorted to, to wear away the lengthening evenings. Nor did the gallant youth forget to hang up the mistletoe, with its white berries, to the imminent peril of all the pretty maids who ventured beneath it.

The poets and writers of England have always dwelt with delight upon many of the humorous games and diversions of their Christmas holidays. Their Robin Hood and Maid-Marian are immortalized in song and story. Perhaps nothing else gives so lively and striking a picture of English humor and character, as did those diversions. Those sports, in process of time, no doubt, were carried to excess; and it was that, un-

doubtedly, that provoked our Puritan sires to repudiate Christmas altogether.

The corruptions that had crept into the observance of this festival, in ancient times, afforded an apology for our fathers in then discountenancing it, but none for our doing the same thing now, when those objectionable features in it have entirely disappeared. And that opinion seems to be steadily gaining ascendancy in the public mind. Every year, now, witnesses a stronger demonstration on the part of the people in favor of observing Christmas as a holiday. The subject needs only to be once properly presented to the public, so as to fairly claim attention, to meet with instant and universal approval. There is something in every Christian heart that beats responsive to the claims of this festival. Notwithstanding all the counter influences among many sects of Christians, yet they have never succeeded in so obliterating the remembrance of it, as to permit it to pass entirely unnoticed and forgotten, even among themselves. In truth, it is a holiday that never can be, as it never ought to be, supplanted or forgotten. Our annual Thanksgiving was undoubtedly instituted to fill the

void made by this rejected festival. In many respects, it strongly resembles it. Like Christmas, it is a religious festival, as well as a season of bountiful hospitality and family reunion, but it is not Christmas. Both festivals are founded in wisdom ; both are appropriate in their places ; both have their own hallowed associations ; and the proper observance of each must necessarily make us happier and better.

The celebration of Christmas seems to carry with it, naturally, the observance of Easter, as a religious festival, commemorative of the resurrection of our Savior. I cannot see that it affords any objection to the celebration of either of these festivals, that the date of the events they commemorate are uncertain, if the great end of the observance of them, is to fix in our minds, and impress on our hearts, those thoughts that are naturally suggested by the remembrance of those events. If we are certain of the *event*, it matters but little whether we are right as to the day and hour.

Easter is one of the greatest festivals in the Greek and Roman church. It is also celebrated with great solemnity by the Eng-

lish church, the Lutherans, and the European Calvinists. This feast occurs, as settled by the Council of Nice, on the Sunday following the first full moon, after the vernal equinox. As it always occurs on the Sabbath, and commemorates an event of such solemn and wonderful interest, it is naturally celebrated in a manner suited to the day and occasion.

There has been evinced a laudable disposition, in some parts of our country, to commemorate certain local events of public interest, such as the anniversaries of the settlement of towns, the landing of the Pilgrims, and other memorable events of a similar character. The custom is a good one, and should be encouraged. The tendency of such holiday observances to strengthen the bonds of union between those persons who observe them, is strikingly illustrated in the history of nations and religious sects. No other two nations, ancient or modern, probably, have employed, in their domestic economy, so many holidays commemorative of memorable events in their history, as the ancient Jewish nation and that of modern France; and no two races of men ever exist-

ed who have exhibited such a devoted attachment to their native land as those two dissimilar ones. The poor, expatriated Israelite, after an age of exile and bondage, still celebrates those events, and still loves his own sterile Judea, and deems himself blessed, even in death, if he can but rest at last amid the graves of his fathers ; while the sentiment ever uppermost in the heart of every Frenchman was truly expressed in the rallying cry of the famishing revolutionary, disorganizing, but still patriotic Parisian mob, "Every thing for France." The Frenchman lives in the glory of his country. He bears poverty himself without a murmur, if his country is only prosperous, and does not mind being despoiled of his wealth and honors, and even to have his sons dragged away to be sacrificed at the cannon's mouth, if it tends to the glory of France. Napoleon was every thing to Frenchmen, so long as he was necessary to the aggrandizement of France ; nothing to them as soon as his power to serve her ceased. The first and last thought of the Frenchman is a thought on his country, like the intrepid Ney, whose last words, when about to suffer execution of sentence

as a traitor, were, "Aim true. France forever! Fire!"

The same tendency of the holiday system may be observed in the strong religious prepossessions and attachments of those same Jews, and of the Catholics, both of which sects, it is well known, have employed holidays more in their religious observances than any other religious sects whose history is known to us. Almost every nation has its historical events which are more or less commemorated, and that serve in some degree as a rallying cry in the hour of discord, or of danger, — its Thermopylæ, its Runnymede, its Bannochburn, or its Bunker Hill.

But there is another class of holidays that still more deserve encouragement, though bounded by a far narrower circle. I allude to family holidays, commemorative of the births and marriages of the several members. No family should fail to mark with more or less holiday honors, those, to them, deeply-interesting events in their brief history. A slight recognition of them, as periods of time fraught with pleasing recollections, is sure to make a lasting impression on all who observe them. The bestowment of a little present;

the united enjoyment of a holiday privilege ; a better-spread table ; a few companions or friends entertained ; any thing, however humble, done in honor of the event, is another strand added to the cord that is to hold that member of the family, for whose honor these things have been done, to his or her moorings around the family hearth. There is a charm about such family observances that dwells sweetly in the memory, like the cadence of an old song ; and with the return of the day come back all those old and hallowed associations, that have been so aptly termed "the light of other days."

I have already adverted to the very unwise custom that many of us have of extending the labors that belong alone to the day, into the evening and the night. That custom is so obviously impolitic, not to say unjust to other interests, that even those who practise it seldom defend it. I am persuaded that, if those who are now engaged in the very praiseworthy effort of promoting a more holy observance of the Sabbath, will but turn their attention to two things in our industrial economy, and remedy those evils, the more holy observance of the Sabbath

will follow as a matter of course. The first is to discountenance all evening labor, and the second is to establish Saturday afternoon as a *quasi* holiday period, when neither clerks, apprentices, journeymen, nor any other class of persons, are expected to be at their business posts. Under our present system, most of the clerks in our counting-rooms, and apprentices and journeymen in other occupations, are kept to their task from sun to sun, week in and week out ; and lucky are they if they escape at that. Complaint is made that there is too much riding out and rambling on the Sabbath, particularly in large places ; and it is well known that, in most cases, it is those persons that do it. Is it a matter of astonishment that they do it ? I confess that, as much as I prize the institution of the Sabbath, and believe in the wisdom of observing it as a day sacred to rest, as well as to holy devotion, I should be more astonished, if, under such circumstances, those over-tasked clerks and apprentices should fail to desecrate it. No ! If a holy observance of the Sabbath is to be brought about, we must begin at the root of the evil, and give all classes time, during secular

hours, for recreation and amusement, so that, when the Sabbath comes, it shall find us prepared, both in body and in mind, to welcome it as a delightful season of rest, both from the toils of business and the excitements of amusements. I will venture to say, that, in that point of view, if the whole community could be brought to suspend their business on Saturday afternoon, (as almost all our public institutions do,) it would do more towards promoting a proper observance of the Sabbath, than thousands of societies, organized for that purpose, wielding millions of money, and sustaining a countless number of lecturers in the field.

THE END.

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